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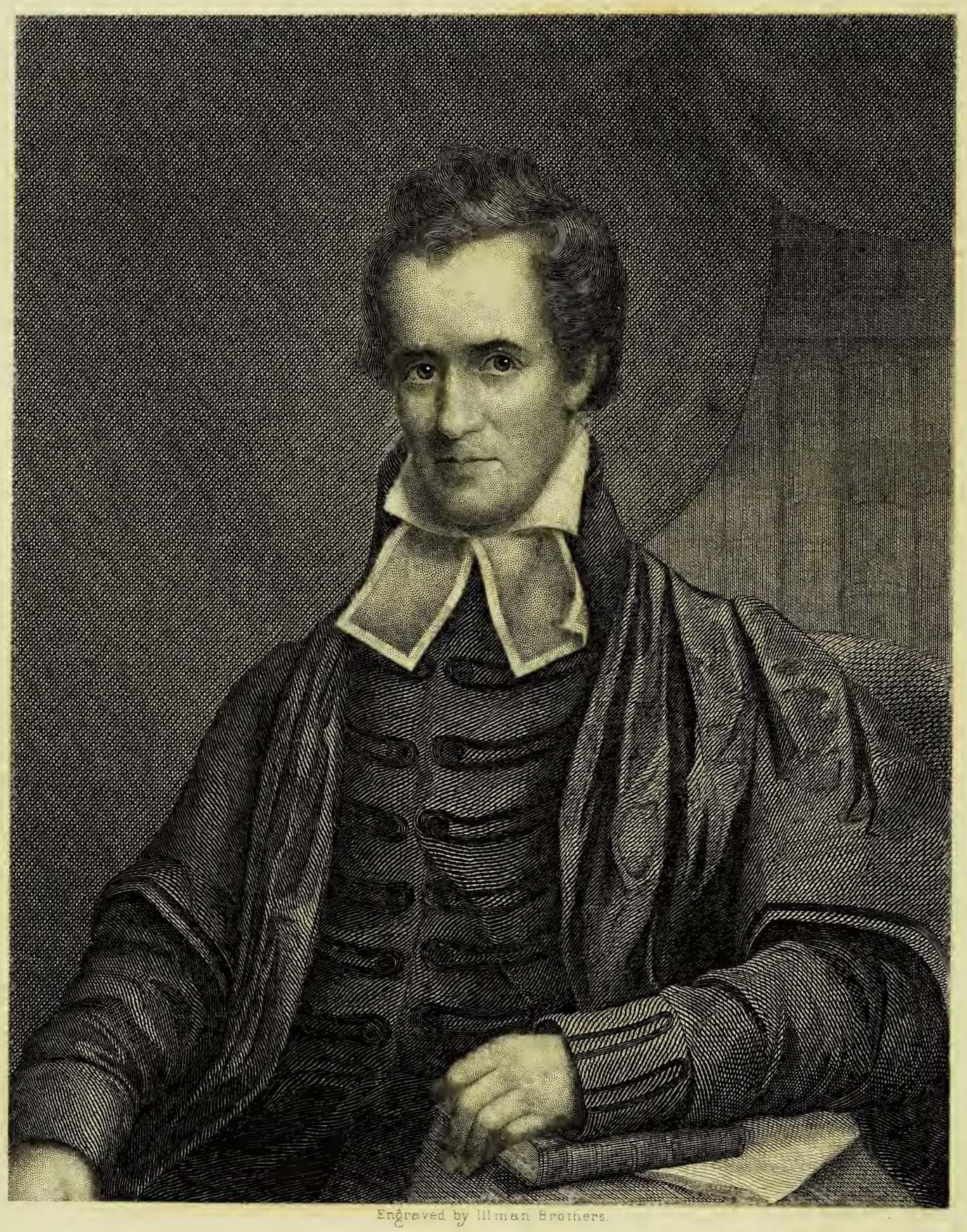
PHILIP LINDSLEY, D.D.



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PHILIP LINDSLEY, D.D.

Philippus Lindsley

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THE

WORKS

OF

PHILIP LINDSLEY, D.D.,

FORMERLY VICE-PRESIDENT AND PRESIDENT ELECT OF THE COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY, PRINCETON; AND LATE PRESIDENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE.

EDITED BY

LE ROY J. HALSEY, D.D.

PROFESSOR IN THE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY OF THE NORTHWEST.

WITH INTRODUCTORY NOTICES OF HIS LIFE AND LABOURS,

BY THE EDITOR.

"He was a scholar, and a ripe and good one."

VOLUME II.

SERMONS AND RELIGIOUS DISCOURSES.

PHILADELPHIA:
J. B. LIPPINCOTT & CO.
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CONTENTS OF VOL. II.

PAGE

INTRODUCTION..... 7

I.

On a Learned Ministry: Being a Plea for the Theological Seminary at Princeton..... 31

II.

The Duty of Observing the Sabbath, explained and enforced in a Sermon addressed more particularly to the Young..... 85

III.

Early Piety Recommended..... 119

IV.

On True Wisdom for Time and Eternity: A Discourse in two parts. 155

V.

On the Improvement of Time..... 203

VI.

Pleasing God rather than Men: A Farewell Sermon at Princeton. 247

VII.

The Pastoral Office and Work: A Discourse at the Installation of Rev. John T. Edgar..... 301

VIII.

The Necessity of Regeneration; or, The New Birth..... 379

IX.

PAGE

On the Necessity of Revelation, and Man's Agency in Diffusing a Knowledge of it 413

X.

On the Divine Government 437

XI.

The Conduct of the Unbelieving under the Warnings of the Gospel 467

XII.

On Human Depravity and its Remedy: A Discourse in two parts 495

XIII.

Self-Examination; or, The Proper Preparation for Celebrating the Lord's Supper 533

XIV.

On Spiritual Mindedness 563

XV.

The Nature and Duty of Evangelical Repentance 591

XVI.

Ministers of Christ, as Stewards of the Mysteries of God, required to be Faithful: An Ordination Sermon 629

XVII.

The Bible Adapted to Man as he is 663

XVIII.

The Great Salvation 701

INTRODUCTION TO VOL. II.

A BRIEF OUTLINE

OF

DR. LINDSLEY'S CHARACTER AS A PREACHER.

BY THE EDITOR.

This second volume of Dr. Lindsley's works is chiefly a selection from his Sermons, as the first was from his Educational Discourses. It may, therefore, form an appropriate introduction to present, at this point, some brief analysis and delineation of his character as a preacher. His eminent ability as an educator, and his success in founding and sustaining a new institution in the West amid manifold discouragements, were in a large degree attributable to his rare gifts and attainments as a minister of the gospel. As a general rule, it holds good in every Christian land, that the most faithful and successful instructors of the young have been found either in the ranks of the ministry or among those who have been taught to feel that the teacher's office is sacred and divine. The minister of the gospel who devotes his life mainly, or even in part, to the instruction of the young, carries, almost as a matter of course, the high and sacred responsibilities of the one calling into that of the other. With him it is ever a double work, and a doubly solemn and sacred office. And it would be well if all teachers could partake of the same spirit of consecration, and magnify their work, as one related both to time and eternity, to be performed not only as unto man, but unto God.

The Sermons selected for publication in this volume, it will be ob-

served, present a wide range of subjects, and a great diversity in the style and method of preaching. They have been selected partly with a view to present this variety. They do not differ more as to their length than as to their whole subject-matter, their mode of arrangement, and the occasions of their delivery. There is one thing, however, which belongs in common to them all—they all have a bearing, more or less directly, upon the work of education, the great work to which their author had devoted his life. They are all related, more or less intimately, to the instruction, guidance, and salvation of the young. This formed the theme of almost all the occasional sermons, which he preached from time to time, at Nashville and in other places, after assuming the presidency of the college; and the same general subject pervaded most of the discourses which he prepared in earlier life, while in New Jersey. In making a selection for this volume, from the whole body of manuscript sermons now before us, as well as from those which he published in pamphlet form, from time to time, it has been thought best to take examples both of his earlier and his later productions. The first seem to have been prepared with a view to the ordinary ministrations of the Sabbath, such as a regular pastor would preach to his congregation from week to week. They have, therefore, more of the saving truths of the gospel, presented in a style adapted to meet the wants of the people generally. The sermons of his later years, prepared for installation and other occasions, have a more special adaptation, and introduce a wide range of discussion, always, however, bearing on the great work of education. Had he become the pastor of a church, instead of the president of a college, his preaching through life would doubtless have been in the style of his earlier sermons. As it was, preaching for the most part in the pulpits of regular pastors, and on set occasions, he took such opportunities to present a wide range of topics connected with the education of the young, the defence of Christianity, public morals, and the general interests of society.

It may not be easy, or even possible, in the brief compass here proposed, to group together into one view all those strong and salient points which marked his preaching and formed the elements of his

power. There are many things common to all able and eloquent preachers. The things in which they resemble each other are, perhaps, more numerous and more important than those on which they differ: so that rightly to appreciate one, is to understand all the rest. But still, with all original minds of the first order, there will be many points of great dissimilarity and divergence, distinguishing, either singly or by their combination, each one from all his compeers. It will be sufficient for our present purpose, to set before the reader some of the more obvious and strongly marked characteristics of Dr. Lindsley's discourses, so far as we can recall them, either from the impressions made at the time of their delivery, many years ago, or from a careful reading of them more recently. And, in doing this, we shall mention not only those points which found a peculiar development in him, but such also as he had in common with other eminent and successful preachers. If the discourses in this volume should, on examination, not be found to illustrate and sustain all the points here enumerated, the reader must bear in mind that these form only a small proportion of all that the writer has had the privilege of hearing from the same lips: and that there is something in the presence and look of the living preacher which produces an impression which not even his own words can fully convey to those who have never heard him. Still, it is our conviction that a careful reading of the present discourses, by those who can appreciate the additional power which an energetic and eloquent delivery would give them, will bear us out in all that is here claimed for Dr. Lindsley as a preacher.

One of the first and most striking characteristics that occurs to us now, suggested both by our recollections of the man and a fresh perusal of his discourses, is the great earnestness of his spirit as a preacher. This indeed marked all his utterances, public and private. Whenever he took up a subject, in conversation or in public discourse, he entered into it with might and main. He seemed to pour the whole force of his mind into it; and, as he advanced in the discussion, his eye kindled with enthusiasm, his voice swelled in force and volume, and his whole frame and aspect marked a man who was uttering the full convictions of his soul. This exceeding earnestness evidently

arose from the feeling that all his opinions rested on the solid basis of truth, and from a deep conviction and love of truth as the most important of all treasures. Gifted with a vigorous intellect, smitten in early youth with an ardent love of knowledge, and having accepted the word of God as his portion and the sure standard of all divine knowledge, he appears to have sifted and tested his views once for all; then to have held them through life with the strongest tenacity; and whenever he undertook to inculcate and defend them, he did it with his whole soul and spirit. Earnestness is the essence of persuasion. Nothing more wins on the convictions of others than one's own earnest conviction of the truth. No one could hear Dr. Lindsley utter his strong, mature, and unambiguous sentiments, on any subject in the vast range of subjects to which he had given his attention, and no one we think can read his writings, without being struck with this quality, this earnestness of spirit, this whole-hearted conviction of what his own mind had accepted as the true and the good. However men might disagree with him in sentiment, there was no room for disagreement as to the fact that his own mind was fully leavened with all that he essayed to inculcate on others.

His favourite maxim, that whatever was worth doing at all, was worth doing well, he carried into the whole domain of speech: and it was an invariable practice with him not to speak in public until he was prepared, and then to utter his sentiments with the emphatic earnestness of a teacher who felt that words were things, and that truth was the most important of all things.

Closely allied to this exceeding earnestness of spirit, and indeed the necessary result of it, was his energetic and commanding delivery. It mattered not whether he spoke from a fully-written and read manuscript, or from the apparent promptings of the moment, without notes of any kind, (for he was accustomed to both methods,) his discourses were always delivered with animation, energy, and emphasis. His words, whether flowing rapidly or slowly, came not only full of thought, but pregnant with deep emotion. This animation of delivery was indicated in his voice, in his gesture, and especially in his look and attitude. With a deep musical voice, articulating every word and sylla-

ble with the most perfect distinctness, with a quick, energetic movement of the arm, never intended to be descriptive, but always impressive and forcible, with an eye flashing as from the kindling fire of his thoughts, and his whole look and figure assuming the air of one born to instruct and to command his fellow-men, he gave utterance to his most emphatic passages in a style of intensity and ardour which, while it was perfectly natural to him, would be difficult to imitate or describe. At times he could not be far from that point which John Foster, speaking of Robert Hall, calls an "impetuous and even imperious energy." Still, with him the energy seemed to belong far more to the inner than the outer man. It was not the energy of physical action, but of thought; and, even when his manner was the most excited, there was no departure from the utmost decorum. His delivery, especially when he approached the close of a sentence, and put the whole force of his voice upon each word, with a slow and measured emphasis, was one of lofty and commanding dignity. This indeed was one of his striking points, as original as it was impressive. It was *sui generis*, unlike, at least in the degree to which he carried it, anything we have heard in other public speakers. And it was wonderful to see how much additional power and beauty could be infused into our venerable mother English by this music of a perfectly distinct and telling pronunciation.

He did not seem to pay much attention to the mere graces of delivery. There was, in fact, no appearance of any studied conformity to the rules of oratory. He appeared simply as one pouring out a rich stream of thought which, from its very fulness, must have vent, either by finding a way or making one. And all his utterances seemed just as natural and necessary to him, as they were unique and unlike those of other men; still there was much in the whole tone and aspect of the man that contributed to the impression made by his speaking. At the time the writer first saw and heard him, he was in the full meridian of his strength and usefulness. His personal appearance at that time was exceedingly fine. It might well be called commanding, though he was slender, and not above the medium stature. His form was perfectly erect and symmetrical. His features were chiselled after

the finest Grecian mould. He had full-black hair, and a spacious forehead of almost marble smoothness. His dark, penetrating eye flashed with indescribable emotion as he spoke; while his whole frame seemed to dilate and rise with majesty. His voice was rich and musical alike in its highest and its lowest notes; and there was a peculiar play of expression about the mouth, indicative of decision and conscious mental power, which no painter's art could ever catch. All these outward attributes, aside from his rare intellectual gifts and attainments, contributed to make him attractive and eloquent as a preacher.

His manner of delivery, however, varied much with the subject of discourse and the occasion. Sometimes it was simply conversational, especially when speaking extemporaneously. This was his usual method in the lecture-room. But he carried it also into the pulpit with marked success, and in this style delivered some of his longest discourses; but on important and set occasions he delivered his more elaborate discourses from a full manuscript; and at these times he always spoke with great animation, and often with thrilling effect. He was one of the few readers of a discourse who could throw just as much life into that method of delivery, and keep the attention of his auditory just as fully awake as if he were speaking extemporaneously. This rare ability was evidently attributable to two causes: first, the intrinsic originality and beauty of the matter which he was presenting; and secondly, the whole-hearted enthusiasm with which, as every hearer saw, he entered into it himself. There was first the sterling metal of thought; and then the genial glow of feeling. And these two essential elements, combined with a musical voice, a fine appearance, free command of language, and the most refined classic taste, were sufficient to make him, in the truest and best sense of the term, an eloquent preacher.

We may mention next the radiant clearness of his style as one of his most striking excellencies, both as a writer and a public speaker. No reader, we think, need ever peruse one of his sentences a second time, in order to understand his meaning. No hearer, whatever the occasion or the subject, whether he spoke extemporaneously or from

manuscript preparation, could be in any doubt as to what he intended to say. This arose not only from the strong, clear light in which the thought lay in his own mind, but from his perfect mastery of language. His conceptions were definite and clear, and he was able to clothe them in words which formed a perfect mirror to the thought. The forms of speech, the best words in the best places, all the forces and proprieties of expression, had evidently been with him a careful study. No one understood better, or could command more readily for all his purposes, the whole power of English speech. His early love of classical study, his familiarity with the great masters of Greek and Roman literature, and his own natural taste in all that related to style and diction, conspired to give him an unusual mastery over our mother tongue. Hence, as all his writings show, his diction, while simple and plain, even to the comprehension of a child, at the same time exhibits a strength of expression adequate to the whole burden of his thought, together with a precision and a delicate shading of beauty, which the cultivated classical scholar will best know how to appreciate.

We can scarcely doubt that in all his written discourses, and perhaps in many of his unwritten lectures and conversations, every sentence, as it came from his pen or his lips, had been carefully moulded into that form which would present the very last analysis of plainness, of strength, and of beauty. His style everywhere exhibits these three excellencies in combination. He avoided all mere niceties and polish of diction as inconsistent with strength. He shunned all harshness and hiatus of speech as inconsistent with true classic beauty. And he abhorred all meretricious adornment and verbiage as inconsistent with that straightforward simplicity and plainness, which alone could reveal the clear current of his thought. He seems to have repudiated utterly the idea that speech is but a vehicle in which to conceal one's thoughts. With him it was a mirror of exquisite finish, of the broadest surface, and of the very highest power of reflection, to pour forth on all around him those forms of truth and beauty which, from all the realms of science, literature, art, nature, and divine revelation, were ever crowding into his own mind. The story is told of a

distinguished German philosopher of the transcendental school, that when a distant correspondent and admirer inquired of him as to the precise meaning of a certain passage in one of his works, written some quarter of a century before, the philosopher, after a very careful examination of the passage, which had long been forgotten, wrote back to his friend that, at the time of writing the passage, he felt assured, it was full of profound thought, but he had now lost the clue to it, and could not tell precisely what it meant. It is not every eminent author that might not be liable to a similar perplexity, if too closely questioned. We venture to say, there is not a sentence of all that Dr. Lindsley wrote, which could suggest to any reader the slightest feeling of uncertainty as to his meaning.

The chaste and classic purity of his style, as well as its stirring eloquence, we think will be apparent to every competent reader of the volumes of his works now published. They might well be taken by the young as models of a chaste, vigorous, healthful style. If we mistake not, they will be found to contain a pure well of English undefiled. It would be well, indeed, both for the interests of our scholarship and the public taste, not to say good morals, if our American youth, who expect to win their way through the world chiefly by public speaking, would abandon the flashy and meretricious literature of the times, and come to such a fountain as this to drink. We think there is no hazard in commending these Sermons and Addresses to their careful study, not only for the words of truth and wisdom which they utter, but as admirable models of all they could wish to attain in a good speaking style. They will find here both thoughts that breathe and words that burn—the fine gold of truth without the alloy of bombast and extravagance. They will find the whole art of expression exhibited in its simplest and most transparent forms. They will see, by a practical illustration, how a public speaker may declare all his mind without mysticism or ambiguity; how he may be strong without being rude, boisterous, or vulgar; how he may be pointed and original, and even fascinating to his hearers, without setting at defiance any of the proprieties of logic, good taste, or common sense; how he may attract, instruct, and edify the largest and most promiscuous popular assembly,

without any departure from the old landmarks of soberness and truth; how he may carry the richest treasures of learning, the fruits of science, the elegant culture of classic literature, into the most solemn and sacred of all professions, and lay them down as a willing offering at the feet of Jesus.

Another prominent characteristic of Dr. Lindsley as a preacher was the direct practical bearing of his subject-matter. The chief topics of his discourses invariably related either to the defence of the common ground of Christianity, or the elucidation of its essential doctrines, or the inculcation of its moral precepts, or to those great interests and institutions, such as education, the Bible, and the Sabbath, which lie at the very foundation of civilized society. And these were all discussed in the most direct and practical way: in a way to give instruction and to enforce duty, rather than to gratify curiosity or challenge admiration. We have scarcely known any preacher, possessing his learning, and his ability to grapple with abstruse and difficult questions in theology or philosophy, who so studiously avoided them in the pulpit. He did not feel himself debarred in the pulpit from discussing any topic of education, ethics, public justice, civil and religious liberty; on the contrary, he often introduced them, allowing himself in this respect the widest latitude: but he never discussed them in any other than the most practical way, suited to the perfect comprehension of any popular audience. He never dealt in mere abstractions. He never indulged in fruitless speculations and conjectures. He never perplexed his hearers with difficult controverted points, which neither he nor they could ever hope, in this mortal state, to settle. His mind was eminently practical in its constitution, and he loved to present all subjects in that practical light which would make the strongest appeal to the common sense of mankind, and have the most direct bearing on the interests of society and the duty of the individual. There was no attempt in his preaching, or in his ordinary instructions to his pupils, to explain a miracle, to fathom the mysteries of the Bible, to solve metaphysical puzzles, or even to clear up those more familiar problems and paradoxes of our conflicting theological systems, on which so many other preachers are accustomed to try their strength. It would have been

gratifying to many, no doubt, and perhaps instructive to some, to have heard him on these difficult points. It is possible that he may have carried this aversion to speculation and controversy to an extreme. Some of his brethren in the ministry thought that he might, at least occasionally, have contended more earnestly for that distinctive denominational faith which they knew he believed as cordially and held as tenaciously as themselves. But he judged differently. It was not because of any unwillingness to grapple with such subjects, for it is clear that his mind, at an early period, had grappled with them all, and formed its own deliberate and fixed opinions. But his avoidance of these deep themes of controversial theology in the pulpit arose partly from the idea that they did not properly belong to him as the president of a college connected with no one denomination of Christians, that they were more within the province of the pastors of the churches; and partly, no doubt, from that strong practical tendency of his mind, which led him to think that they were not the most profitable themes for a promiscuous audience in the ministrations of the Sabbath. Be this as it may, it was always an impressive and instructive spectacle to see a man of his treasured learning and his ample range of thought, with childlike docility sitting at the feet of Jesus, accepting implicitly all the deep mysteries of revelation as unquestioned verities, and expending the whole force of his intellect and eloquence in commending them to the belief of the people, and in enforcing upon the conscience the great practical duties of a life of godliness. Such an example of humility, in accepting as true what God had revealed, and holding in unquestioning abeyance all dark, doubtful questions, did more perhaps to disarm skepticism and inspire devotion than all the artillery of argument which he could have brought to bear in the most formal discussion.

To illustrate the general tenor of his preaching, especially when called to address the young, his simplicity, directness, unction, and brief but comprehensive statement of Christian doctrine, we take a single passage from his Farewell Sermon to the students in Princeton College, in 1824:—

"I rejoice, indeed, in the belief, that, however little I may have con-

tributed towards guarding you against the snares and temptations which beset your path, and towards imbuing your minds with the salutary principles of virtue and religion, which alone can render science a handmaid to usefulness and true honour, yet that this sacred duty has not been neglected. Others have laboured, and laboured zealously and faithfully to enrich your hearts with heavenly wisdom and enlightened piety. You have been kindly conducted to the pure fountain of truth and excellence. The Bible has been opened to your view. Its precious pages you have diligently studied. Its sublime doctrines and mysteries have been ably unfolded. Its practical precepts, its terrible sanctions and penalties, its cheering promises, consolations and rewards have been affectionately exhibited, and pressed home upon the conscience.

"Let the Bible be the companion of your future lives and studies. Yes, were I now about to give my dying counsel to the dearest objects of my heart, I would say—clasp the Bible to your bosoms as your best friend and counsellor. Read it daily, and with humble prayer for the illuminating influences of that blessed Spirit who first inspired and revealed it. There you will learn the origin, the fall, the whole history of our once innocent and happy, but now guilty and wayward race. There you will behold the justice, holiness, wisdom, goodness, and mercy of the infinite Creator, and Judge, and King, and Saviour, all harmonious in punishing and in redeeming the rebels against his government. There you will read the true character of your own hearts. A character which your reason and conscience will constrain you to recognize. There you will discover the necessity of that radical change in your whole nature, without which you cannot delight in acts of dutiful and holy obedience. There you will imbibe that humble, teachable temper and spirit which will dispose you, instead of cavilling at the divine economy, to sit down meekly at the foot of the cross, and to learn of Jesus, as little children, the wonders of his redeeming grace.

"The Bible will become a lamp to your feet, and a light to your path, during the whole of your earthly pilgrimage. It will teach you how to use the world so as not to abuse it. It will tell you how to

employ riches, and honours, and learning, and power, and influence, so as rightly to enjoy them yourselves, and to render them subservient to the happiness of others. It will animate your breasts with a hope and a faith, it will inspire you with a courage and resolution which will carry you safely through every trial, cause you to triumph over every obstacle, and to rejoice, with joy unspeakable and full of glory, in the midst of an opposing and persecuting world.—Should it ever please God to prove you as he proved Job, and Daniel, and Stephen, and Paul; and as he is daily proving multitudes whom he loves, and whom he will presently welcome to the brightest mansions in his heavenly kingdom."

In his discourse, published in the present volume, on the Fidelity of Ministers as Stewards of the Mysteries of God, we have an admirable summary of the kind of doctrines which he preached. He there draws the line clearly between the truths of God, which ought to be preached by every faithful minister, and all merely human speculations and inventions. The discourse is throughout a fine illustration both of the radiant clearness of his style and of the strong practical cast of his subject-matter, though it is on a confessedly difficult theme. Would that the deep mysteries of religion could always be as well handled!

Closely connected with this practical cast of mind was another distinguishing characteristic of his preaching. It was what, for want of a more descriptive term, may be called the symmetrical proportion of his views of truth. He always aimed, so far as we can judge, to preach the truth with soberness and discrimination: not to exalt one doctrine at the expense of another, or, in his ardent advocacy of one part of the system, to ignore all the rest. He saw things not only in a clear and a strong light, but in a full, round light. Though he often preached with an emphasis and a tone of authority which left not a lingering doubt behind as to the positive assurance of his own views of truth, still he was as free from all distortions and exaggerations of the subject in hand as he was from all idle speculation and conjecture. His discourses are remarkable for a just and cautious moderation, and balancing of truth with truth, duty with duty. As his strong, practical common sense prevented his ever going off into the

transcendental region of theory and frigid abstractions; as he looked at all divine doctrine chiefly in its bearing upon human duty, and all duty in its bearing upon man's present and eternal good, so he endeavoured to preach the truth, not in brilliant descriptions of its abstract power and beauty, but in those just proportions, limitations, and practical bearings which would bring it home to the every-day experience of men. The great interest which always attended his pulpit ministrations, and brought larger numbers than usual to every sanctuary where he was expected to preach, was, no doubt, in a great measure owing to this characteristic. When he was to preach, it was always understood that both saint and sinner would be told his duty in the plainest possible terms—not only how to perform it, but when and where he had most recently neglected it. It was always understood that sin, and vice, and crime, in their latest and most popular forms, would be exposed; that selfishness, ambition, and covetousness, however fashionable, would be laid bare under his faithful and searching dissection; that cunning, deceit, fraud, hypocrisy, and over-reaching dishonesty, however they might hide themselves from other teachers in high and sacred places, would find no quarter under his withering invective. The twofold object of all his preaching was to turn men from passion, prejudice, ignorance, every form of folly and wickedness, and to allure them to virtue, honesty, and a life of godliness. And, as a general thing, those who came to hear him recognized such justness and discrimination in his views, so large an insight into human nature and the realities of life, so many things that commended themselves to their own observation and experience of life, and withal so much of the essential spirit of the gospel, in its faith, hope, and charity, that, however long the sermon, (and at times it was little short of two hours,) they went away wishing to hear him again. The aged were confirmed and chastened by his mature wisdom, the young were instructed and impressed with his enthusiastic eloquence.

We can here, perhaps, best illustrate our meaning by an example. As an illustration of his cautious discrimination in the statement of truth, we select a passage from his Sermon on Early Piety, preached to the students of Nassau Hall in 1821; and as the reader, in glancing

over it, will mark how, instead of running off into partial and highly-wrought descriptions of either youthful innocence or depravity, he weighs and balances the whole case, guarding against all mistakes and all extremes on either side, we beg that he will ponder well the deeply solemn and important sentiments which the passage sets forth with so much truthfulness and so much power:—

"If religion be ever worthy of our attention, (and we trust its importance will not be questioned,) then it follows, that no period of life can be so suitable as youth is, to embrace it and to conform to its precepts.

"At this early season, the heart is less sophisticated and corrupted by the world: more disengaged from its cares and pursuits, and more susceptible of good impressions. Some of the worst passions which usually sway the human heart have not as yet, it may be charitably presumed, obtained firm dominion over it. There is a tender sensibility to truth and moral excellence; a lofty aspiring after that which is deemed great and good; a kindly sympathy with the sorrows and distresses of the unfortunate and suffering; which long practice in the crooked ways of a hardening world can alone eradicate or destroy.

"I mean not to pronounce a eulogy on the innocence and virtues of youth. I know that they inherit that corrupt nature and those vicious propensities which mark all the descendants of our common parent as the children of wrath and the heirs of death. But I know also that all men are not equally wicked. Those who have sinned, ten, fifteen, or twenty years, are not so likely to be hardened in iniquity as those who have persisted in a course of transgression some thirty, or forty, or fifty years. Ordinarily, therefore, the shorter the period during which a person has lived in a sinful, impenitent state, the greater is the prospect of his return to God and of his restoration to the divine favour.

"There are, it must be granted, many awful exceptions to this general rule. I mean not to flatter you, my young friends. I have seen, and probably most of you have seen, some young persons—very young, indeed—of fifteen years old and under—so abominably wicked, that

the veriest fiend might blush at the success of his own wiles and at the sight of his own work!

"That youth, however, is the season most favourable to the service of God and most acceptable to him, we are assured in numerous passages of Scripture: and by many instances there recorded of his special and distinguished favour to his youthful worshippers. 'I love them (saith the Lord) that love me, and those that seek me early shall find me.' This divine declaration and promise ought to be regarded as an encouragement of the most precious and animating kind. It is a pledge of success to all who seek to remember their Creator in the days of their youth.

"It is the universal voice of reason, of revelation, and of experience, that youth is the time, the best time, to serve the Lord.—I had almost said, the *only* time to commence this service. Aged sinners, who scarcely entertain a hope of their own salvation, acknowledge this. And on their dying beds,—how often have they importuned their young friends to take warning from themselves: and not to delay a single moment to make up their peace with God! This awful fact of frequent recurrence speaks a language which I know not how any sophistry can evade, or how any heart can resist. It is a standing—a perpetual monitor to the young. It is a continual call from the borders of the eternal world: it is a warning from the tomb: it is a voice from heaven and from hell. It is heard in every corner of our land. Wherever the hoary head appears, there it is. For every old person, believer and unbeliever, will, if candid, tell you that if you ever mean to be pious, you have no time to lose: that youth is the precious season to commence, and vigorously to prosecute the arduous but delightful work.

"Dare, then, my young friends, to resist the allurements and to despise the sneers of a wicked world; and to remember your Creator, while he is willing to remember you. Rise above the solicitations, the ridicule, the wit, the abuse, the satire, and the laugh of the profane, the profligate, and the scoffing. Let not the specious arguments of reasoning skepticism, or proud infidelity, bewilder or darken your understandings; or ensnare your hearts by flattering your natural incli-

nations. Resolve to be wise: and to consecrate to religion and to God the vigour of your days. So shall heaven smile on you and protect you. The *good* shall everywhere hail you as fellow-travellers to another and a better country: and the *abandoned* shall secretly applaud your conduct, while they envy you that *good part*, which they know can never be taken from you."

In our humble estimation, there is scarcely any more important qualification in a minister of the gospel than that he should be able to preach the truth in its just proportions; to declare the whole counsel of God, rightly dividing the word of truth, and giving to each a portion in due season. For lack of this qualification, we have known the gospel to suffer damage at the hands of many of its otherwise able advocates. There is nothing gained by over-statement and exaggeration. A one-sided presentation of the truth borders closely on error. The Bible presents the truth everywhere in its symmetrical proportions, without exaggeration or partiality. And we ought to follow its example of moderation. To single out one doctrine of the system, and ride it as a hobby, to press and exaggerate it beyond all scriptural authority, and, therefore, to caricature and distort it, is the next thing to preaching positive error. And there is necessarily a recoil with all thinking minds. The ignorant and superficial applaud, but the pious mourn. The educated but unbelieving classes are repelled from the ministrations of the pulpit by such exhibitions of extravagance and paradox; and the serious minded are pained just in proportion to their own more intelligent acquaintance with the whole truth of God. This is a fault, too, into which many popular ministers are very likely to fall. The mass of unreflecting people everywhere are fond of novelty, excitement, hyperbole, and smart sayings, even in the sacred desk. With the crowd such things pass for genius and originality. And the young preacher, ere he is aware, falls into this snare, of thinking he is uttering original and startling truths, when he is only dealing in extravagant paradoxes, and attempting to feed the flock of God with food not to be found in the Bible. There is much in the pulpit of our day that passes current for originality and strength of thought, which, stripped of all its pretentious disguises, is nothing more than the im-

pudent folly of saying, in God's name, what God has not authorized any man to say.

Another prominent characteristic of Dr. Lindsley as a preacher was his large and liberal charity towards other denominations of Christians. Most of his preaching was confined to what might be called the common domain of Christianity. When he defended religion, he defended it for all the churches. When he preached its doctrines or enforced its precepts, he generally occupied so broad a ground that all evangelical denominations might have subscribed to his sentiments. He was greatly averse to religious controversy; and everything like sectarian bigotry and intolerance received his most unqualified denunciation. It was not because he was in any sense a latitudinarian in his views or his feelings. He was through life a firm and uncompromising Presbyterian, and his writings furnish abundant evidence that he had cordially adopted that system of doctrine which is incorporated so fully in the standards of the Presbyterian Church, and has been known through all ages as the orthodox system. But he was no bigot, either in the holding or the presentation of his opinions. His principle was, to live and let live: to agree to disagree, to allow others that liberty which he claimed for himself.

Christian charity was often the theme of his discourses. But, at the same time, this large liberality and courtesy towards other professing Christians did not make him tolerant of their errors. He always used great plainness and boldness of speech in the denunciation of both sin and error; as much so, too, towards what he conceived to be the sins and errors of his own church as of any other. The reader of these discourses will be struck not only with the terrible invectives which he uttered against the heaven-daring sins of the ungodly, the profane, the profligate, but with the sarcastic and withering rebukes which he sometimes administered to those who, in the garb of religion, and in the high sanctuaries of official station, indulged in the more reputable but not less dangerous vices of ambition, intrigue, and hypocrisy. Not unfrequently he gave offence at the time by these fearless denunciations, especially to his own brethren. This was the case in his sermon entitled a Plea for Princeton Seminary. But no man can

read it at this distance from the scene and find any just cause of offence to any right-minded person.

He was a true Presbyterian, but not a high-churchman. In his views of church government, as indicated in his sermon at the installation of Dr. Edgar, and other discourses, he went further in the way of concession to other forms of polity than most Presbyterian ministers would now be willing to go. We think that on this subject he yielded too much—more than a true charity requires of us—indeed, more than the Scriptures justify us in yielding. But it must not be forgotten that, on these points, he was educated in a liberal school, and that, too, at a time when the strong tendency of all the great Christian denominations in our country was not to get farther apart, but to draw more closely together. It is not strange that, under such influences, his naturally liberal and free spirit should lead him to the very extreme of Christian charity, for the sake of uniting, prospectively, the whole Christian Church into one brotherhood. But the times are changed. And seeing there is now no probability of such outward union, and that the tendency is for each denomination to stand within its own enclosure and defend its own ground, there is little question that the Presbyterian system can make out a clearer title to divine right than any other.

There is another thing which had much to do in giving this large liberality to his views and to his preaching. It was the position which he occupied as the head of an unsectarian college. Striving, as he did, not to found a denominational, but a great Christian University, open alike to all the churches, he felt that he stood on public and common ground; and that, as a public servant, he ought to inculcate the very largest liberality consistent with scriptural truth. This position, doubtless, contributed much to give character to his preaching; and thus, while never withholding or concealing any essential saving truth of the gospel system, he was led, in non-essential points, to go farther than his brethren in acknowledging the claims of others, and perhaps farther than he would himself have gone under other circumstances.

All things considered, his Plea for Princeton Seminary, before the

Presbytery of New Brunswick, in 1818, is the most remarkable of his sermons. It made a powerful impression at the time, and contributed much to the success of the then struggling institution. It will be read with interest now, after a period of more than forty years, when the theological school has grown from one to six in the Presbyterian Church alone, and has come to be regarded as an essential requisite of every denomination. But when Dr. Lindsley pleaded the cause so earnestly for Princeton, it was the day of small things, and the day of opposition. He had to defend the undertaking against many conscientious objectors, and also against some of another class, whom he describes as ready to "fight for the seminary if they supposed their own interests would be promoted by it, and just as ready to fight against it for the same reason." He describes the condition of the seminary at that time as "having been for seven years a beggar before the public, soliciting alms from one end of the continent to the other, and a beggar still, without the means of completing its edifice, or of permanently supporting a single professor." And it is interesting, at this distance of time, especially in the light of past experience, to notice how clearly he foresaw, and how strongly he could even then portray the advantages of a theological seminary training:—

"A public seminary has been justly styled the world in miniature. Here is usually assembled a variety of characters and dispositions: and much may be learned by a constant intercourse with them. One's own asperities are worn off by attrition with his companions. His natural arrogance, pride, vanity, self-sufficiency, are curbed, restrained, eradicated; or, at least, deprived of their most prominent and odious features. Here he finds his proper level. His talents are elicited and expanded by a generous collision and emulation with his fellow-students. A spirit of brotherly love, charity, liberality, harmony, is cherished and cultivated. Acquaintances are formed and friendships cemented which will be highly beneficial to the church at large; grateful to the parties: and durable as life. A spirit of unity and fraternal affection will pervade the bosoms, not merely of fellow-students towards each other, arising from personal acquaintance and actual association; but the same spirit will be strongly felt by all the pupils of the same

institution, at whatever period they may issue from it, or wherever they may be located.

"Hence will result a great and permanent good. Hundreds of ministers will, in a few years, be established in various parts of our country who will see eye to eye: who will harmonize in sentiment: who will understand by *orthodoxy* the same system of doctrine: and therefore be free from the jealousy, suspicion, misapprehension, and bigotry which now keep asunder so many brethren of the same family, and prevent their cordial co-operation in the common cause of religion and truth. I therefore hail the establishment of the Theological Seminary as a public nursery for the church. As affording within its hallowed walls the best aids, the greatest facilities, the strongest incentives to industry and piety. As calculated most effectually to bring to the test the piety, prudence, talents, and attainments of the candidate, before he is permitted to appear in public, to the disgrace, it may be, of the cause which he professes to espouse. For it may be safely presumed that the young man who shall, in the course of his studies in our seminary, appear grossly deficient in any of these requisites, is unfit for the sacred work, and ought not to be suffered to engage in it. Here is another advantage of the most important kind to be derived from the seminary which the church could not expect from any private system whatever:—The advantage of judging from a young man's carriage and deportment, from his habits, his social intercourse, his daily conversation, his literary and devotional performances, whether he is likely to prove useful to the church, and also in what particular sphere he may be most useful. Here his real character will be developed. Those latent springs of action, those dominant dispositions which in private might long be concealed from his intimate friends, and perhaps even from himself, will display themselves in such a manner as to prove to his teachers and fellow-students his fitness or unfitness for the holy ministry. And I repeat, that there is incomparably less danger of the church's being deceived with regard to her candidates while under a course of public discipline than could exist on any other plan."*

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* This earnest zeal for high ministerial instruction, which Dr. Lindsley exhibited at so early a day, in his advocacy of Princeton Seminary, he carried

But it is not necessary to extend further this sketch of his ministerial character and labours. From a careful reading of the discourses of the present volume, each one will perhaps be able to form for himself a juster conception of the man than we can give in this brief and imperfect analysis—for only a few of his many strong points of char-

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with him to the West, and it seemed a very natural close of his public labours as an educator that, after his resignation of the presidency at Nashville, he should be elected a professor in the Theological Seminary at New Albany. We find him entertaining the idea of a Theological Seminary at Nashville, as will appear from the following extract of a letter to a friend, under date of August 9th, 1842: "Allow me to advert to a favourite project which I once entertained, and which had some influence in determining me to remove to this country. After much inquiry, reflection, and examination, I had come to the conclusion that *here* would be found the most eligible site for a great central and efficient Theological Seminary. Accordingly, within four months of my arrival, and at the first meeting of the Presbytery of West Tennessee, (then nearly as large as the present Synod,) immediately after my admission as a member, I submitted a plan, with my views and reasons *in extenso*, (April 11th, 1825.) The subject was thoroughly discussed, and argued in good temper, and in a Christian spirit, *pro* and *con*. And ultimately it was resolved 'to establish a Theological Seminary, to be permanently located in the town of Nashville, to be known by the name of the Nashville Presbyterian Theological Seminary.' Upon the final vote no minister voted against it. We intended, in the first instance, to act in the business as a Presbytery—then to secure the co-operation of other Presbyteries and Synods—and in due time to solicit the countenance, patronage, and support of the General Assembly. But at the very next meeting of the General Assembly, in the following May, (1825,) that body resolved to establish a Western Theological Seminary, and took measures for its location, without knowing anything, I believe, of our previous movement. Thus our project was, of course, indefinitely postponed, perhaps utterly defeated. When the late Rev. Dr. O. Jennings became the pastor of our church in this city, he often expressed to me his firm conviction, that Nashville would have been a far better locality than Pittsburg (or Alleghany) for the institution: and he deeply regretted the choice which had been made chiefly through his agency. I am still of the same opinion. *When* shall our great valley have a school of the Prophets, and *where* shall it be?" That which could not be answered in 1842 the Providence of God has since made plain; for, while Alleghany has proved to be a good location, after many years of struggle, the great valley has two flourishing schools besides, one at Danville and one at Chicago.

acter have been referred to. Still, we trust that the present account of him, inadequate as it is, will not be wholly useless, coming as it does from one who was a frequent hearer of the preacher at a time when he was in the full noon of his power and eloquence.

The writer has often regretted that Dr. Lindsley did not consent to preach more frequently. Endowed with such high qualities, and so fully furnished as he was for the great work of preaching the gospel, it always seemed to his friends that he should have continued to preach to the whole extent of his physical powers and his opportunities. When he did preach it was always to the largest and most deeply attentive congregations. The people were always eager to hear him; and his ministerial brethren were always urgent, even to importunity, for him to preach. There was for him an open door of opportunity in every church of almost every denomination wherever he went. And yet, like some other gifted preachers, after a certain period he seemed to shrink from the work of preaching, as something not within his proper province. This was, no doubt, attributable, in his case, to a delicate and high-toned sensibility, which made him unwilling even to appear as thrusting himself forward on any occasion where others, in virtue of their pastoral office, might feel that they had a better right to be heard. He regarded the educator's chair as his proper office, and seemed to feel more at home as an humble hearer in the pew, than as the authorized expounder of the pulpit. There are indications, in some of his later discourses, that he did not regard the pulpit as his forte, and that he filled it only on occasions when no one else could be found to do so.

In this we think he was greatly mistaken: and doubtless every reader of this volume of his discourses will agree with us. However it might accord with his own feelings to appear but seldom in the pulpit, it was never the feeling of his hearers or of his ministerial brethren. Even as an educator, not to speak of the other higher relations of God's ambassador to dying men, we think he might have accomplished a greater work than he did accomplish, had he preached more frequently. We say this in full appreciation of his great life-work as an educator, and in all honour of his ministerial services to

the church of his choice; but we give it as our own deliberate judgment, for the benefit of every young minister who shall read and admire these discourses, that preaching is, after all, our greatest work. In our estimation, there is no throne of power on the earth higher than the pulpit. We cannot doubt that, in doing the great work which Dr. Lindsley did in Tennessee, as President of her University, the grand element of his power and his success was his magnificent preaching. When the pulpit is what it ought to be, filled with learning and eloquence, filled with humility and love for truth, filled with a burning zeal for God's glory, a yearning desire to save men and the noble charity of the gospel, our highest wish is to see it multiplied a thousandfold, and occupied on all possible occasions.

ON A LEARNED MINISTRY.

[TRENTON, OCTOBER 6, 1818.]

ON A LEARNED MINISTRY.

A PLEA FOR THE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY AT PRINCETON.*

And they came, every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one whom his spirit made willing, and they brought the Lord's offering to the work of the tabernacle of the congregation, and for all his service, and for the holy garments.

The children of Israel brought a willing offering unto the Lord, every man and woman, whose heart made them willing to bring for all manner of work, which the Lord had commanded to be made by the hand of Moses.

And they spake unto Moses, saying, the people bring much more than enough for the service of the work, which the Lord commanded to make.

And Moses gave commandment, and they caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp, saying, let neither man nor woman make any more work for the offering of the sanctuary. So the people were restrained from bringing.

For the stuff they had was sufficient for all the work to make it, and too much.—*Exodus*, xxxv. 21, 29; xxxvi. 5, 6, 7.

The Bible warns us to beware of the world:—not to be too much involved in its cares, pursuits, and interests:—not to make it our idol, our trust, our chief good: but to use it so as not to abuse it:—thankfully to employ such portion of its good things as may fall to our lot in works of charity and mercy; of humanity and religion;

Delivered, before the Presbytery of New Brunswick, in Trenton, October 6, 1818.

and with our condition, whatever it be, to be contented:— to be diligent in business, and yet not to be over anxious about what we shall eat or drink, or wherewithal we shall be clothed.

Some preachers of the gospel in their zeal, it is apprehended, occasionally transcend the scriptural limits in their denunciations of the world, and in their warnings against it. It would seem as if their remarks frequently implied a censure on the ordinary industry and enterprise of men in worldly business. As if it were vanity, and folly, and sin, to be industrious, prudent, and economical to such a degree as to accumulate property beyond the supply of present wants. Now, if we take a very slight view of the actual state of society around us, we shall find that temperance, sobriety, justice, liberality, and all the virtues are more prevalent among the industrious, thrifty, money-making class of our citizens, than among any or all others. And of course, that this description of the community is decidedly the best.

To support one's family; to educate one's children; to make provision for old age, for sickness, for casualties or adverse dispensations of Providence; to acquire the means of assisting the necessitous, of supporting the gospel, of promoting all beneficial, charitable, and religious institutions and enterprises, are lawful incentives to strive by honest industry to obtain so much of this world's treasures as will suffice for these important purposes. Thus far I may safely go. But where precisely to stop, is not so easy to decide. That there must ever be great diversity in the conditions of men, as regards

external circumstances, none, I presume, will question. With the same motives therefore to exertion in all, there will be various and extremely dissimilar results; arising from the different degrees of intelligence, enterprise, perseverance, skill, management, and (what is commonly styled) good fortune, with which they undertake and prosecute their several schemes for the attainment of wealth. It is impossible then to fix the exact boundaries at which they ought to desist; since it is manifest that they are not to come out equal in the race, whatever may be their desires, and pains, and efforts.

One thing however, in the way of limitation, I think I may be warranted in laying down; and that is, that it is inconsistent with the precepts of religion for a man to seek to accumulate property for selfish purposes merely, or to such an extent as to render his children independent; or, in other words, to leave them so much wealth as to enable them to live luxuriously without any species of employment, or care, or industry on their part. And this limitation in the pursuit of riches is pointed out by sound wisdom and human policy, as good and reasonable. Universal experience demonstrates that it is dangerous to pass it, and likely to defeat the very end which the avaricious and ambitious themselves have in view in amassing wealth; which generally is, to secure ease, and affluence, and honour to their posterity. The heir very frequently squanders foolishly the treasures laid up by industry and frugality. But without dwelling longer on these matters, I remark, that as there are very few persons in this part of our country who are

likely to reach this extravagant height of fortune, so it is the less necessary to caution men against it. I leave my hearers therefore, undisturbed in their various pursuits, provided they be honest, and provided they do not make a *god* of the world, and bid them be diligent in business, and to grow moderately rich if they can.

I am now going to tell them what to do with their money when they get it.

They are not to spend it for their own gratification:—not to pamper lust, or pride, or vanity:—not to encourage idleness and dissipation among their children, but for a thousand useful and benevolent purposes. A few of which I will briefly mention.

1. Every man, blessed with the means, is under as much obligation to render assistance to a poor suffering neighbour as he is to pay a just debt. The indigent and the wretched have claims on his property, which, if he refuse to satisfy, he is condemned by the law of God, as much as if he were to defraud them of their wages.

2. He is bound, according to his ability, to contribute to the support of the gospel in his own vicinity: to aid in building, and in keeping in good repair, a church, or house for public worship, which will accommodate *all* the people, rich and poor, within a particular district: and to contribute liberally towards the maintenance of a respectable minister of the gospel. And here, in passing, I shall take the liberty to observe, that very few men seem to entertain any just idea at all about this matter of supporting a pastor. There is not one clergyman of twenty in our country who receives an adequate pecuniary sup-

port from his congregation. In proof of this assertion, I appeal to the fact, that so many are obliged to keep schools, to labour on farms, to take boarders, or to resort to some other occupation in order to add a trifle to the scanty pittance allowed them by their people.

Correct sentiments are not generally entertained on this subject. Men seem to forget that a clergyman has wants of precisely the same nature with their own. That himself and family must be fed and clothed, and his children educated. That it is just as much his duty, as it is the duty of any Christian, to provide for the future.

But besides the ordinary demands for money to which he is subject equally with other men, there are some specialties in his case which render a larger provision necessary for him. Every clergyman, for instance, ought to be enabled to own a valuable library, or else every congregation ought to collect a public library for the use of both pastor and people. And ten thousand dollars would be a sum small enough for any wealthy congregation to expend on this object. Such a sum, or even one much larger, might be raised by a *rich* congregation in the space of a very few years, without burthening an individual. But if it were done within fifty or a hundred years, by small annual appropriations, still the object would be ultimately attained. And no congregation is so *poor* but that it might furnish a small sum annually for this purpose;—say twenty, thirty, fifty, or a hundred dollars. Such a sum judiciously expended would in time procure a very valuable collec-

tion of books for the mutual benefit of pastor and flock. The advantages of such a system are too obvious to require specification.

A minister of the gospel ought to be freed, as far as practicable, from worldly cares and pursuits. He ought to be distinguished for liberality and hospitality. He ought to have it in his power to set an example to his flock in these respects. To give to all public, charitable, and religious institutions handsomely and munificently. In a word, to be the almoner of his people. This he cannot be without a suitable revenue. And it often happens that a clergyman is charged with meanness, because he is obliged to economize rigidly; to live coarsely; and to make use of every honest means to get along: or, what is the truth, his people are covetous, and withhold from him a decent allowance for his services. I might say a great deal on this subject, and without the imputation of being an interested party. I wish that it may be honestly canvassed and thoroughly understood by all the good people of our land.

3. There are various other objects which have claims on the purses of the rich, and on all in proportion to the means with which Providence has favoured them. Some of these are nearer at hand, others more remote. Such as schools, especially charity and Sunday schools for the education of the poor: Missionary, Tract, and Bible societies: and, in general, all institutions which have for their object the temporal, moral, spiritual, and eternal welfare of our fellow-men.

4. But the object to which I design principally to

invite your most serious attention at this time, and for which I have selected my text, by way of accommodation, is the *Theological Seminary* lately established by the supreme judicatory of our church; and which is yet almost struggling for existence.

The want of such an institution had long been perceived and lamented by the wisest and most enlightened Christians in our country. The difficulties which were anticipated, were of so formidable a character, as for years to deter the boldest spirits from venturing to exert themselves, agreeably to their wishes, for its establishment. At length the attempt was made. And its incipient progress and prosperity have been such as to cheer the hearts of all the genuine friends of enlightened piety throughout our land. The corner-stone has been laid amidst many discouraging embarrassments, but consecrated by the prayers and the faith of the few who could look beyond these momentary obstacles to that never-failing *source* whence originates every wise and truly benevolent plan, and from which alone adequate and seasonable support can be confidently expected.

Yes, brethren, the great Head of the Church was appealed to and most humbly invoked to preside over and to direct the destinies of this school of the prophets. And we firmly believe, whatever may be the apparently adverse trials and occurrences which it may be doomed to sustain, that it will eventually triumph over them all. Whether the present generation shall have the honour of completing the glorious work or not: it will be completed. It will find friends and advocates and supporters

somewhere and at some period. We entertain no fears about the event. But we feel for the reputation of the age in which we live: and particularly for the section of the church in which it has been located. We do not wish that posterity should rise up and condemn the lukewarmness and illiberality of their fathers. We do not wish that the Christian world should, as present spectators, be permitted to wonder at and to censure the apathy and indifference of their brethren in the immediate vicinity of this infant seminary so successfully commenced: but which may be left for years to struggle hard before it reaches the maturity and vigour of manhood. It was not so in the time of Moses when commanded to build a tabernacle for Jehovah. The people brought gifts till they were forbidden to bring any more.

Now let us inquire into the nature and object, advantages and disadvantages, of this seminary.

The object, as you know, is to educate and qualify young men for the work of the gospel ministry.

The importance of this object will not be questioned, except by those who either openly or secretly disbelieve or disregard the gospel. Or by those who are weak enough to imagine that ministers need no education; that the gospel is to be propagated by miracle, or, what is the same thing, that men are to be called and specially inspired by the Holy Ghost for this office. Or by those who suppose that the old way of studying for a short time with a retired pastor, is the best way.

The experience of eighteen centuries ought to be sufficient to convince the world, or at least the intelligent

Christian world, that religion cannot be inculcated by ignorance: that knowledge of no kind is intuitive or innate: that it cannot be acquired but by a course of study and application under such teachers and with such helps as are adequate to its attainment. That nothing great or good is ever effected without pains and industry: or, in other words, without resorting to the means naturally adapted to the production of the end. No man is expected to excel in any mechanical employment; in any literary or scientific pursuit; in any worldly business; in any honourable or lucrative profession; without previously serving an apprenticeship, or submitting to a proper course of discipline and preparatory study.

Who, for instance, would think of asking an ignorant peasant to construct a watch or a telescope: to explain the properties of the circle, of light, or of colours: to calculate an eclipse: to unfold the mysteries of the planetary system: to defend his property, character or life, in a civil court: to prescribe for him in sickness: to amputate a limb, or to perform any one important service out of his ordinary sphere? By what kind of process then can *such* a man be deemed suddenly qualified to officiate in that most awful, momentous, and deeply interesting of all human concerns? To explain the mysteries of religion; to become a spiritual guide to the ignorant, the perverse and the perishing? To inculcate the sublime doctrines of the gospel: to serve at the altar of Jehovah: to be the ambassador of the King of kings: a minister of reconciliation: a defender of the faith: a physician of souls: an advocate for the truth in opposi-

tion to the arts, the cunning, the malice, and the learning of the world?

How was it under the ancient dispensation—under the Jewish theocracy? Did the Deity thus judge and thus ordain? Were the priests and prophets thus suddenly distinguished and elevated? Were they selected for the service of the altar and the temple from the rude, ignorant, inexperienced mass of the people? How was it in our Saviour's time? What does his own example teach us? Did he not himself conform to the established Jewish usage, by abstaining from his public ministry till he had attained the mature age of thirty? Did he not instruct his own disciples patiently and perseveringly for several years before he commissioned them to go forth as teachers of others: and then, not without the extraordinary power of working miracles, and the extraordinary illumination and aid of the Holy Spirit, who, in every emergency, supplied the defect of natural talent and of education; so that they could speak any language and enter the lists against every subtle adversary? Could the candidates for the sacred office, at the present day, be favoured by the immediate instructions of *Him* who spake as never man spake: could they for a length of time equal to that enjoyed by the first preachers of the gospel, sit under the heavenly voice and wisdom of the great Master of assemblies, and then like them go forth into the harvest with the same extraordinary and miraculous gifts, and under the same divine guidance and assistance, we might safely cease any further concern about the matter. We might then leave the work of

religion, and preaching, and salvation, in the hands of God, and wait to see him accomplish his own purposes in the way which seemeth good in his sight.

Now multitudes seem to imagine, or affect to imagine, that as the Apostles were generally plain, unlettered men, so would it be better to let such men now assume the sacred office and trust to the same extraordinary aid. This sort of reasoning often serves as a very convenient plea to withhold all countenance and support from any system which is likely to make a demand on the purse of the selfish and avaricious. The fact is, men generally love their gold so much more than they love their souls, that any shadow of excuse is eagerly seized to satisfy their consciences and to justify their conduct. And if they can but *conscientiously* refuse a dollar to the cause of religion, they are content; without too nicely scrutinizing the ground on which they presume so conscientiously and comfortably to decide and to act. This is one of those subjects in regard to which a very convenient latitude is, as it were by common consent, conceded to conscience. And men's consciences are often found to be very happily moulded to the accommodation of their ruling passion.

There are some entire sects of Christians whose creed and practice seem to have originated from the secret attachment of the heart to the world: and who therefore very cheerfully relinquish to the divine Spirit the labour and expense of maintaining and propagating the benevolent principles of the gospel. There are not a few individuals of the same stamp among all denomina-

tions of Christians; and in our own, it is believed, may be found a goodly number of the same cold-hearted, mammon-loving caste, who grudge every farthing they are constrained to give, and who never do give, but as if they were giving alms to a sturdy beggar, rather to get rid of his importunity than from any desire to assist him, or from any conviction that he deserves assistance.

I am aware that some notions are prevalent in our country which perhaps do not obtain to the same extent in any other; and which may account, in a small degree, for this seeming anomaly. It is fashionable to believe that learning is a dangerous thing in any hands. That the people can be better served without it than with it. That public offices can be more safely and advantageously filled by plain honest men than by learned men. And hence it often happens that artful intriguing men, without wisdom or principle, are elevated by a deceived people to stations from which the prudent, modest, intelligent, unambitious, and worthiest citizens are excluded. I shall not comment on this fact. If this abuse be inseparable from our peculiar political institutions, we must submit to it. We must take the evil with the good. For well persuaded am I that we could not make a change in these respects for the better. And certainly no nation on earth has half the reason to be satisfied with its government and laws, and with the general administration of them, that we have. Let it not be supposed then that I reflect on the political establishments of my country.

The general prejudice against learning at which I have

just hinted, may account in part for the indifference manifested towards learned clergymen, and to every plan for the education of youth for the ministry. Glad, however, would I be to be convinced that it might be wholly resolved into this general prejudice. But I am persuaded that the evil lies deeper. That it springs from indifference and opposition to the religion of Jesus. This too for many years has been a very popular sentiment throughout Christendom. There has long been much avowed, and there is still much secret infidelity in the world. And although open hostility to the gospel has, in a great measure, ceased, yet the spirit of the monster is still lurking amongst us. It is under a degree of prudential restraint. Or it has assumed other forms, and operates in a different mode. Men, by a sort of tacit compact, have agreed to let religion, and religious men, and religious institutions alone. Or else, under the guise of the name, have ventured to efface its peculiar discriminating features, and to mould it into a form very little, if at all, differing from the system advocated by its opponents.

But, brethren, allow me to appeal to facts. What says the history of the Christian church? Go to its commencement. Examine the qualifications of its original founders. We have already hinted at their peculiar and distinguishing advantages and prerogatives: such as have never since been enjoyed or possessed. Who succeeded them? Men of the greatest learning then in the world. Men of whom the world was unworthy. Men who could put all Grecian and all Roman science to the blush:—who could meet the aged philosopher and the wily sophist on

their own ground:—Clemens, Ignatius, Polycarp, Justin, Irenæus, Tertullian, Origen, Cyprian, Eusebius, Athanasius, Basil, Chrysostom, Lactantius, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, and a host of martyrs and fathers too numerous to mention.

When learning declined, religion degenerated. When learning had vanished, religion was nearly extinct. When letters revived, religion again flourished and assumed a purer form.

Who were the first to discover, expose, refute, condemn, and demolish the papal errors and the papal tyranny? Who, but the men of the largest minds and the greatest learning? Need I name Wickliffe, Huss, Jerome of Prague, Luther, Melancthon, Calvin, Latimer, Ridley, Cranmer, Knox, and a hundred others, as eminent for literature as religion; for integrity and courage as for zeal and ardour in the cause of truth; who nobly dared to stem the torrent which had nearly deluged the Christian world, and nearly buried in ruins the whole Christian fabric?

Shall I trace the progress of religion from that bright epoch when the Sun of the Reformation first rose above the horizon and began to dispel the darkness of a long dismal night which seemed to threaten an endless duration, down to the present time? What is the character of the men who have laboured in the field and on the battle-ground with most efficiency and success? Who have written books, and thundered in the pulpit, with argument and eloquence irresistible and overwhelming? Were they not the most acute, best disciplined, most profoundly erudite of the ages in which they flourished?

Shall I come nearer to your own times and to your own doors? Shall I invoke the spirits of a Hammond, a Chillingworth, a Charnock, an Owen, a Baxter, a Flavel, a Stillingfleet, a Tillotson, an Eliot, a Swartz, a Jahn, an Edwards, a Davies, a Horsely, a Porteus, a Buchanan, a Witherspoon, a Martyn?—but the catalogue would be endless.

The history of Christianity is a triumphant refutation of the heresy and the slander that learning is unnecessary, or that it is unfriendly to genuine religion. It exhibits proof most positive that without learning nothing has been or could have been effected. That zeal without knowledge leads to fanaticism, to error, to superstition, to enthusiasm;—to abuses and heresies the most absurd and abominable.

On this topic I might indulge in a variety of illustration from facts. I could summon your attention to a thousand mournful evidences of the danger of suffering self-sufficient aspiring ignorance to obtrude itself into the direction and government of the church. But the limits of a discourse forbid my enlarging.

Allowing then the necessity of a good education, in conjunction with ardent undissembled piety, as a necessary qualification for the gospel ministry; I ask where, or how, is this education to be acquired? Do you reply, by resorting to some respectable clergyman in private? But is not every parochial minister sufficiently burthened already with the numerous and arduous duties of his station; without superadding the still more difficult and responsible office of preparing and training up young men

for the holy ministry? Who has leisure for this task? Who has the qualifications for it;—I mean, in addition to his pastoral duties? Who has the books and all that array of helps with which every active inquisitive youth ought to be abundantly furnished during the period of his novitiate and apprenticeship?

But is it necessary, at the present day, to contrast the benefits of a public with those of a private education? Is not the former mode universally adopted for every other purpose:—for the classics, for science, for law, for medicine, for commerce, and politics?

This question, it is believed, was first agitated and formally discussed by Quinctilian when treating on the most suitable discipline for accomplishing an orator; and by him decided in favour of a public education. I shall not take up your time in stating the arguments usually advanced in behalf of either or each of these modes. But only observe, that if a public education be judged the most eligible for all the secular professions and pursuits of life: which seems to be the case from the fact that, in ninety-nine instances out of a hundred, it is preferred: I would like to be informed why the student of theology should be an exception to the general rule;—why he should study in private rather than those who are prosecuting other studies? Is there more danger that his morals or his piety will be corrupted than of theirs? Is he more likely to be seduced by bad company than other youth?

All boys, from infancy to manhood, through the several gradations of schools, academies, and colleges, are educa-

ted in public. Every candidate for the ministry has been thus educated during the earlier part of his course, and is generally required to produce the testimonials of his having been so, previously to his being permitted to enter upon the study of divinity. Shall then young men, between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five, who have gone safely through the ordeal of our public institutions at a tenderer age, while surrounded with vicious companions, and beset by a thousand temptations, be thought to be exposed to imminent and extraordinary danger, when, at a maturer and more experienced age, they shall attempt to prosecute a course of theological study in company with none but the serious and the pious, or those reputed to be so? Where is the hazard to morals and religion under such circumstances:—in such a place:—engaged in such pursuits:—where the teachers are pious:—where the pupils are pious:—where every subject of investigation and discussion is connected with piety:—where, in a word, everything tends to remind them of duty and to inspire them with devotion?

Is religion, let me ask, a selfish, solitary thing? Was it intended for the cell or the cloister: the desert or the forest? Where must it flourish, if it flourish at all? Where must its active energies, its benevolent sympathies, its enlarged views, its purifying principles, be exhibited and exerted, if not in the world:—on the public stage of life and business; and, I may add, of vanity and ignorance, of crime and wretchedness? How is a young man to be qualified for such a scene? By spending his youth in the vale of retirement; occupied in lonely study; in

secret devotion; away from the solicitations of worldly men and worldly objects; and then suddenly to be ushered into the midst of the world destitute of any acquaintance with it? Is there any knowledge after all of more importance to a clergyman than a knowledge of the world:—of men and manners?

A public seminary has been justly styled the world in miniature. Here is usually assembled a variety of characters and dispositions: and much may be learned by a constant intercourse with them. One's own asperities are worn off by attrition with his companions. His natural arrogance, pride, vanity, self-sufficiency, are curbed, restrained, eradicated; or, at least, deprived of their most prominent and odious features. Here he finds his proper level. His talents are elicited and expanded by a generous collision and emulation with his fellow-students. A spirit of brotherly love, charity, liberality, harmony, is cherished and cultivated. Acquaintances are formed and friendships cemented which will be highly beneficial to the church at large; grateful to the parties: and durable as life. A spirit of unity and fraternal affection will pervade the bosoms, not merely of fellow-students towards each other, arising from personal acquaintance and actual association; but the same spirit will be strongly felt by all the pupils of the same institution, at whatever period they may issue from it, or wherever they may be located.

Hence will result a great and permanent good. Hundreds of ministers will, in a few years, be established in various parts of our country who will see eye to eye:

who will harmonize in sentiment: who will understand by *orthodoxy* the same system of doctrine: and therefore be free from the jealousy, suspicion, misapprehension, and bigotry which now keep asunder so many brethren of the same family, and prevent their cordial co-operation in the common cause of religion and truth. I therefore hail the establishment of the Theological Seminary as a public nursery for the church. As affording within its hallowed walls the best aids, the greatest facilities, the strongest incentives to industry and piety. As calculated most effectually to bring to the test the piety, prudence, talents, and attainments of the candidate, before he is permitted to appear in public, to the disgrace, it may be of the cause which he professes to espouse. For it may be safely presumed that the young man who shall, in the course of his studies in our seminary, appear grossly deficient in any of these requisites, is unfit for the sacred work and ought not to be suffered to engage in it. Here is another advantage of the most important kind to be derived from the seminary which the church could not expect from any private system whatever:—The advantage of judging from a young man's carriage and deportment, from his habits, his social intercourse, his daily conversation, his literary and devotional performances, whether he is likely to prove useful to the church, and also in what particular sphere he may be most useful. Here his real character will be developed. Those latent springs of action, those dominant dispositions which in private, might long be concealed from his intimate friends, and perhaps even from himself, will display themselves

in such a manner as to prove to his teachers and fellow-students, his fitness or unfitness for the holy ministry. And I repeat, that there is incomparably less danger of the church's being deceived with regard to her candidates while under a course of public discipline than could exist on any other plan.

In confirmation of my argument, were it worth while to argue the matter any further, I might summon before you the great mass of eminent Christian divines who have ever laboured in the church,—in the *old* world and the *new*,—for they are all *the dead* or *the living* witnesses of the beneficial influence of a public education. In every college and university of Europe there has ever been a faculty, or professorships, of Theology. And in those great schools or rather communities, were trained the martyrs and reformers, the pastors and missionaries, whose names will be precious in the churches, till time shall be no longer; and who will shine as bright stars in the firmament forever and ever. The most of those institutions in fact, owe their existence and celebrity exclusively to the clergy: and theology was once the primary object of study in them. Our own college* too was established on the same plan and with the same great end principally in view. It was the church of Christ that its pious founders mainly looked to when they invoked the God of Heaven to second their feeble efforts in its behalf, and to preside over its destinies. It too has had its professors of theology; and the American

* The College of New Jersey

church will long acknowledge her obligations to their labours and to the labours of their pupils. But now this sacred department is transferred forever to the sister seminary, and the whole Presbyterian Church in our land is solemnly pledged to support it.

I cannot however dismiss this topic without a word or two more in reply to the commonplace objection which is so often advanced against the seminary. It is whispered in every corner, and by a hundred tongues, whenever the seminary is pointed at or spoken of, that it is a dangerous innovation;—a piece of extravagance;—that the edifice is quite too large, too expensive, too elegant; better calculated to make mere scholars and fine gentlemen than hardy soldiers of the cross. Then it is usually added, that a more secluded, private, frugal course of instruction and of living, would be much more likely to foster a spirit of humility and industry; of meekness, patience, temperance and devotion; of enlightened views on religious subjects, and of all those peculiar graces and qualifications without which, the greatest attainments in literature are useless or detrimental. Or, in plainer terms, that it would be much better for a young man who wishes to become a minister of the gospel, to go to some worthy, retired pastor in the country: assist him in teaching his school or ploughing his fields, and receive from him in return such aid in reading *Hopkins* or *Ridgley*, as the good man may find leisure or inclination to afford him.

In making this homely statement, I wish to be distinctly understood as not intending the slightest disre-

spect to any class, or any individuals of the clergy. But merely to give you the plain *English* of the objection; or rather of the substitute which some of our *wise* men propose and laud as preferable to any theological college.

Their whole scheme, however, I hesitate not to denounce as unsupported by reason or by fact; as alike illiberal and absurd. I maintain fearlessly, though not obstinately or fiercely, that the legitimate tendency of all private education, and especially of a system so contracted as the one just supposed, is, to cherish pride; to confirm prejudice; to restrain a spirit of liberal inquiry; to contract the mind; to concentrate its views to a few objects; to lead it into a narrow, partial track; to mould it into the shape and tinge it with the complexion of the master. I do not say that these effects will *always* result; for a naturally vigorous, independent spirit will break the strongest fetters and rise superior to any disadvantages; but that such a system is calculated to produce them, and most frequently does produce them. Hence you will generally find a young man thus brought up, thinking on all subjects, on which he thinks at all, just as he has been taught to think. His master's dogmas and peculiarities become his own. He is perfectly satisfied with his attainments, because they are as extensive as those of his venerated instructor, who is at once his model and the standard by which he measures theological wisdom and orthodoxy. He has never been brought into contact with his equals. His strength has never been put to the trial, and hence he flatters himself that none are his superiors. With a little smattering of letters

and with abundant self-complacency, he marches forth as a candidate among the vacant churches, speedily procures a charge, settles down among a people not calculated perhaps by their own superior intelligence to give him any hint that he is not a perfect *Solomon:* and thus he continues through life the same opinionated, self-important, dogmatical, bigoted creature, that he was at the beginning. Study is dispensed with, either because he has never learned *how* to study and acquired a taste for it, or because he imagines he knows enough already. Hence as he grows in years, he grows in dulness; affects to despise learning and most *conscientiously* opposes every liberal plan for its advancement. This may be a caricature, but it is a good likeness notwithstanding. And I doubt not that some of my hearers have seen more than one who has sat for the picture.

All such men of course will be hostile to the seminary. And one secret motive of their hostility which I have not yet stated; which they certainly never avow, and which they will not thank me for exposing, is *jealousy!* They are jealous of this new mode of making ministers. They are afraid of being eclipsed by their juniors who shall come forth from this institution well furnished for their Master's service. They imagine that themselves must sink in proportion as others rise. And rather than be subject to this mortification, they labour to prevent the growth of an *evil* which they so much dread. There is a great deal of real opposition from this vile source, whether men are conscious of it or not.

But leaving these narrow-minded, jealous preachers of

righteousness and charity to the quiet enjoyment of all the delights which the contemplation of their own plans and ideas must necessarily yield them:—I pass, in the second place, to other hostile bands; and to the consideration of other and more specious objections which are openly and boldly advanced against this school of the prophets.

2. One grand objection which a few respectable clergymen, and which the great mass of influential laymen urge, is, that the Theological Seminary is calculated to cherish a spirit of ambition and worldly grandeur. That it will eventually become an engine of political power and ascendency. That it will impart too much weight and influence and consideration to the clergy. That they may in time prove dangerous enemies to the liberties of the State. That they ought therefore to be narrowly watched and strictly guarded.

There is something very plausible in all this. And the argument seems to derive countenance from history. I admit that the clergy, in former ages, have possessed, and, in some countries, at the present day, do possess, powers wholly incompatible with the safety and well-being of their fellow-citizens. That they form an *imperium in imperio* extremely dangerous to the natural and political rights of mankind. And this I am as bold in condemning as any other man can be. I am ready also without partiality, or affection, or reserve, to censure and to oppose every project or institution which has a natural tendency to produce such a state of things. A clerical hierarchy or priestly despotism shall never find an advo-

cate or apologist in me. Did I believe that the Theological Seminary of our church could ever be perverted to the effecting of so unworthy a revolution in our ecclesiastical and political institutions, my voice should this day have been heard in its reprobation with the same honest freedom with which it is now feebly raised in its behalf. I am not swayed by party, nor sect, nor interest, nor profession in this matter. I address you as an American citizen who wishes equal privileges to all descriptions of his fellow-citizens, without distinction of sect, or name, or character, or pursuit. I address you as a calm spectator of passing events: an unprejudiced observer of the state and progress of the seminary from its origin to this moment, without the slightest motive to conceal, warp, or disguise any matter respecting it. It is true, I address you as a minister of the everlasting gospel who devoutly prays that the benevolent religion of Jesus may more and more prevail, till every nation, and kindred, and people under heaven shall feel its power and obey its precepts: but without one particle of clanish or professional partiality. Were I a lawyer or a farmer, possessed of the same knowledge of facts, and convinced of the truth and importance of the Christian system, I would avow the same opinions which I now utter. With this explicit declaration of my sentiments, it cannot be supposed that any sinister motives have biased me in this concern.

Let us then candidly examine this mighty bulwark of the opposition:—this grand colossal argument:—this never-failing source of declamation and abuse:—this popular clamour so extensively raised against our school.

The only reason why the clergy once had any political ascendency, was, because religion was established by law.

But the constitution, laws, government and usages of our country give no preference to one system, sect, or creed over another. All religious denominations are equally protected by the law, while the law itself knows no religion. It recognizes no citizens in a religious character. It matters not whether they be Jews, or Mohammedans, or Pagans, or Christians.

To what danger, do you think, the establishment of a seminary for the education of Jewish priests or rabbies, would expose the civil liberties of the people? Or what would be the danger if this were done by the Baptists, Methodists, Episcopalians, Congregationalists,* or any other denomination of Christians? Why then are the Presbyterians so especially to be dreaded? Have you not found that a bishop, (a Diocesan, I mean,) who in Europe is a powerful and wealthy lord, becomes in this country, a very quiet, and, except in spiritual matters, a very unimportant character? In the State, he is as harmless, as powerless, as much a cipher, as the poorest itinerant exhorter in our country. If such be the fact in regard to episcopacy, which, in every country but our own, has been incorporated with the civil government and shared the temporal dominion with nobles and princes; what have we to dread from Presbyterianism,

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* All these in fact have Theological Seminaries:—established, either before or since the delivery of this Discourse.

which is a pure democracy? A system of union and co-operation which has for its basis a perfect parity among the clergy: so that it is not possible for one ever to rise in *rank* above another? It has no tendency to aristocracy, much less to monarchy or despotism. How such men should ever dream of acquiring political power and consequence, I cannot conceive. To succeed in such a plan, it would be necessary to revolutionize the whole nation: to overturn the government: to destroy the constitution. Or, in other words, we must suppose a total change in public sentiment: we must suppose a vast majority of our citizens to have become zealous Presbyterians, and blindly devoted to a set of ambitious, unprincipled presbyters: we must suppose the people to have become, not merely the passive subjects, but the active agents, in this work of their own subjugation. We must, in short, suppose a hundred other impossibilities in order to prepare the way for this dreaded monster to show his strength, or to make the slightest impression on our political establishments.

The fears which men profess to entertain on this subject, so far as there is any reality in them, are occasioned by the spectres and ghosts which the records of past enormities have conjured up in the imaginations of those who do not consider that the like enormities could not possibly exist in this country. It would be a thousand to one a more likely event that, within a given period, a Nero should sit quietly on an imperial throne erected on the ruins of the Republic, than that any ecclesiastical body whatever should control the councils of

the nation, or be incorporated with the popular authorities. I entertain no such apprehension.

So thoroughly guarded on this subject are the constitutions of some of the States, as to render the clergy ineligible to secular offices of any kind.* In such States the clergy might justly complain of being denied the common privileges of the meanest citizens:—of having a mark set upon them as a dangerous body:—of being, in a measure, disfranchised:—of losing, by reason of their profession, the dearest right of free citizens, and which no others forfeit except by the grossest crimes. This is indeed a hardship; and an unparalleled anomaly in a free government.

In other States, the practice and usage of the people have as effectually excluded from civil office the ministers of the gospel as if they were naturally or legally disqualified. Whether this has arisen from an illiberal jealousy of the clergy, or from the moderation and self-denial of the clergy themselves, I shall not stop to inquire. I do not wish the fact to be otherwise. The clergy ought not in general to have anything to do with

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* The 39th article of the Constitution of the State of New York, as established by the convention in 1777, is as follows, viz.

"And whereas the ministers of the gospel are, by their profession, dedicated to the service of God and the cure of souls, and ought not to be diverted from the great duties of their functions; therefore no minister of the gospel, or priest of any denomination whatsoever, shall, at any time hereafter, under any pretence or description whatever, be eligible to, or capable of holding any civil or military office or place, within the State."!!!

political affairs. It would be incompatible with their sacred functions to suffer themselves to be elected to civil offices.

But while I would condemn the clergy on the one hand, were they to manifest a disposition unduly to seek after political distinctions; I would as earnestly contend, on the other, for their *rights* in common with every other description of citizens; and condemn as anti-republican the narrow policy which would formally, and by statute or prescription, deprive them of any natural or conventional prerogative.

Let all men be treated alike. Let them stand, or rise, or fall according to their deserts. Let the ministers of the gospel hold, in the eye of the law, the same place which is held by lawyers, physicians, merchants, farmers, and mechanics:—and no other, better or worse. Then will there be no ground for jealousy or complaint; and no danger to the community from the ambition or artifice of any.

Apply these principles to the case in question. Has not every class of citizens a right to provide for the welfare and education of its own members, provided they do not interfere with the interest or comfort of any other class? Have we not in fact public schools and colleges of law; of medicine; of the arts; and of literature? And why should there not be schools of divinity? In this land of enlightened freedom and equal rights, who will say that the clergy may not make suitable provision for the reputable instruction of those destined to be attached to their own body and to become their succes-

sors in office? May not every sect and denomination do this? Even on the ground that they have their own interest mainly in view, they would be doing no more than all other men do. The pursuit of happiness, the acquisition and enjoyment of property, of honour and science, are guaranteed to all without distinction. And what tribunal has authority here to pronounce that the clergy alone shall be cut off from these pursuits and enjoyments? So much for the *right*, as men and citizens.

Now let us advance a step higher. Are the clergy then useless members of the community? I mean useless in a worldly and political sense. In order to answer this question, I might demand your answer to some other questions. Is morality useless to the community? Are good order, steady habits, temperance, chastity, good faith, honesty, kindness, integrity, benevolence, justice, obedience to parents and rulers, patience, forbearance:—are these useless ingredients in the body politic? Is learning useless? Are science and literature unfriendly to liberty and to happiness: or to the progress and prosperity of agriculture, commerce and manufactures? No; these are all good,—all necessary. Without them, vice, corruption, misery, barbarism, anarchy, confusion, tyranny and usurpation, individual and national debasement and ruin, must speedily ensue.

Well now,—who contribute most to the maintenance and diffusion of virtuous principles, of pure morals, and sound learning in our land and throughout the world? Our enemies and accusers themselves being the judges, are constrained to acknowledge, that for these things

mankind are indebted chiefly to the clergy. This is a tribute of respect; a proof of worth and usefulness which nothing but the most stubborn invincible facts could ever have extorted. This is the eulogy of an unconquered and ungenerous foe!

Here then,—on this proud eminence I might rest: and calmly bid envy and malice, calumny and slander do their worst. For vain is their assault. Impotent their efforts to tarnish, or to pluck from the brow of the well-tried veteran, the wreath of honour, which the wise and the good have decreed him; and which even the wicked cannot at all times withhold.

Human governments could do nothing; the sanctions of law would be a dead letter, were there no laborious teachers to inform the ignorant, to check the natural progress of vice, and to train up the young in virtue's ways. Banish the ministers of peace, and this instruction is at an end.

Every true patriot therefore, every enlightened honest citizen, every prudent magistrate, nay, every man who loves his own welfare, must find it the common interest of all to countenance and uphold this necessary appendage to the State: this main pillar of the civil establishments: this depŏsitory of the learning of ages: this source of instruction to the people: this copious fountain which affords such rich supplies to a nation's most essential wants.

But we ascend higher still, and take loftier and more commanding ground. Be it known to you then, that, the *honest* clergy do not consult their own worldly

aggrandizement: nor do they mainly aim at rendering their fellow-men more amiable, useful and happy *in this life merely.* They have a nobler object in view. It is the *eternal* well-being of man. Their office is the appointment of heaven. They are intrusted with the Lord's work and commanded to perform it. And you are commanded to respect their sacred office: to listen to their instructions and counsels: to obey their precepts, so far as they are the precepts of God's word: to afford them all necessary support: and to be liberal of your wealth in whatever ways pure religion may be best promoted.

However numerous and cogent may be their claims on the gratitude of mankind as their temporal benefactors, they prefer infinitely higher and stronger claims to the gratitude, confidence, and love of men as their spiritual guides and benefactors. I need not stay to inform you what is the legitimate province of the preacher. That it is the immortal spirit of guilty, miserable man which he seeks to purify and to prepare for the mansions of the blessed. That while he spares no pains to smooth the rugged path of life: the pilgrim's journey through this vale of wo: he steadily contemplates a peaceful haven beyond this fleeting, joyless, tempestuous scene. He points to the heavenly country, and kindly shows the lost traveller the road that leads thither.

Commissioned by his divine Master to proclaim glad tidings of peace to the perishing: he labours to fulfil the object of his embassy with a zeal, a patience, a perseverance, which no earthly considerations could inspire:

and which no earthly discouragements or difficulties can damp or destroy.

Is he an enthusiast; is he an impostor? There may be enthusiasts; there may be hypocrites; there may be wolves in sheep's clothing invested with this sacred office. But what then? Does this fact afford any sound argument against the sincerity and good faith of the whole body of Christian ministers? What *good* thing is there in the universe which has not been abused and counterfeited? What wise and benevolent institution has ever existed free from contamination and perversion? Strange indeed would it be, if religion—if the Christian religion—and the ministers of this religion, did not occasionally share the corruption, degeneracy, and abuse which are inseparable from all things here below. There is no form of virtue, no disguise of religion which has not been assumed as a convenient mask for the worst of crimes. And this fact operates with no less force to the disadvantage of natural religion; of natural or political virtue; of human learning and wisdom; and of everything which the world calls great and good; than it does to the disparagement of Christianity and its advocates. This species of argument therefore has no application to the case. Or, if it have, it would equally demolish the systems of the sage and the moralist: of the believer and the infidel. It would leave us nothing but one vast wild of hideous ruin and deformity; of hopeless misery and wickedness. Beware then of this subtle, insinuating, exterminating logic. It is unsound and illiberal. And none but the enemies of truth and piety can employ it.

Christianity is the only system of religion at present known in the world which can lay just claims to a heavenly origin. If it be true, its own infallible oracles declare the appointment, and the necessity of continuing forever, a minister in the church. And how can this ministry be perpetuated except by the regular education of a competent number of young men to supply the places of those vacated by age, infirmity, and death: and to meet the growing demands of an enlarged and daily increasing church? What mode of education can be devised better adapted to meet these wants, than public seminaries exclusively devoted to this object under the special superintendence and control of the church itself? I propose this question with perfect confidence that a negative reply *cannot* be made to it; and will not be made to it, by the wise, the judicious, and the pious.

The exigency of the case suggests this as the only natural and efficient method of furnishing an adequate supply of faithful and enlightened pastors and missionaries for the vast evangelized and unevangelized regions of this almost boundless continent: whose population is annually augmenting in a ratio which confounds all computation: whose spiritual wants of course are multiplying with equal rapidity: and to a degree, which almost overwhelms with discouragement the pious philanthropist while contemplating this great moral wilderness which is scarcely illumed by a ray of gospel light. Surely it is time for the friends of religion and humanity to awake from their slumbers, and to put forth all their strength in one grand effort to meliorate the condition of the

countless thousands of our own countrymen who are literally perishing for lack of knowledge: yes, at this moment destitute of the ordinary means of grace;—without Bibles and without ministers.

I am not in possession of the requisite *data* by which to estimate the exact number of our unfortunate fellow-citizens who are thus situated. But I think it may be safely affirmed that at least one-half, if not two-thirds, of the population of this Republic do not enjoy the regular services of stated pastors; and hardly the occasional labours of the passing missionary. This statement will probably not appear exaggerated to those who will take the trouble to examine into the actual condition of our large cities in these older and more highly-favoured States: as well as of many sections of the country which have been supposed for several generations to enjoy all the benefits of the gospel in the greatest profusion. It will be found that there is much missionary ground within sight of our most splendid churches, and perhaps under the shadow of their spires.—That there is missionary ground in every county and town even of this enlightened and gospelized section of our confederacy. What then may be presumed to be the fact in those States whose very existence is but of yesterday, but whose population already far outstrips many of the larger parent States? We are not however left to mere conjecture on this subject. The amplest evidence is before the public, and within every man's reach, of the alarming truth that our brothers, and kinsmen, and friends, as well as the newly-arrived European, the Negro, and the Indian, are

living and training up children where the sound of the gospel trumpet has never yet been heard. Is not this a pressing call on our benevolence: a call which ought not to be heard for one moment in vain?

What a host of ministers is needed at once to occupy this wide waste! Who can tell the number that would suffice? Greater certainly than we can hope soon to furnish. Could our seminary send forth a hundred heralds of the cross annually, they would be lost in the crowd; or so dispersed over an immense surface as scarcely, in appearance at least, to diminish the want. But instead of a hundred, we cannot reasonably calculate on more than a fifth or even a tenth of that number. And is there a man so blind, so ignorant, so prejudiced, so uncharitable as deliberately to maintain that this number is larger than is necessary? That there is danger that the clergy will speedily become so numerous as to be burthensome to the community:—either as drones and mendicants,—or as wealthy lords and prelates? Alas, how fertile are men in contriving excuses for avarice, and salvos for conscience!

This is an age in which Christians are not allowed to be lukewarm or neutral. They must be hot or cold; for God or against him. The enemies of Christ have marshalled all their forces and issued forth in phalanx strong to the battle. Shall we boldly, in the name of Immanuel, go out to meet them, or tamely sit down in our places, and carelessly leave the event to Providence, as if we had no interest at stake: no part or lot in the matter? What have we done, my hearers: what are we now doing?

Have we done as much as we could do to promote the cause of religion in the world? Have we contributed as much of our worldly substance as we could have contributed and as we ought to have contributed to this glorious object?

I tell you, the fact, that the Theological Seminary of the Presbyterian church has been, for seven years, a beggar before the public: a solicitor of alms from one end of the continent to the other: that it is a beggar still, without the means of completing an edifice, which, when completed, will not accommodate more than a hundred students: and without the means of permanently supporting a single professor: is melancholy, humbling proof that our countrymen are backward in giving to the Lord's treasury. It is proof that we, in the immediate vicinity of this seminary, are peculiarly negligent and culpable. For I scruple not to affirm that there is wealth enough among the Presbyterians of New Jersey to have defrayed the whole expense of establishing and endowing the institution, without sensibly diminishing the revenues or the comforts of our citizens generally. And I think it was from the beginning, and still is, peculiarly incumbent on this State to extend a munificent hand to this great work. Because this State will derive all the pecuniary advantages which such an establishment never fails to yield to any place where it exists. Besides, the reputation which it adds to our little community, the facilities for theological education which it affords our pious youth, and the choice of pastors with which

it favours our churches, ought to be taken into the account.

But on the presbytery of New Brunswick, within whose bounds it is located, and under whose jurisdiction its professors will ever remain, is surely imposed an extraordinary obligation to spare no pains for its welfare. Have we discharged our duty, brethren? Has every clergyman bestowed his own mite, and exerted his influence with his flock and with the public in this behalf? It is not from a particular knowledge of the part which has been acted in this matter by any individual that I venture on these inquiries. You may have all done your duty faithfully and honestly for aught I know. But there is fault somewhere: or the Directors long ago would have been obliged to announce to the people that their treasury was already full to overflowing, and to charge them to bring no more gifts for the sanctuary, as was done by Moses on a similar occasion.

It is possible that a portion of this blame may justly attach to ourselves. It is possible that some of us may have been influenced by the motives already suggested as likely to operate on the minds of the clergy to the detriment of the seminary. Disappointed ambition too, may have stimulated some, coldly to overlook or insidiously to thwart, its interests. For it must be admitted after all, even by the professed apologist of the clergy, that there ever have been, and still are, some selfish, intriguing, ambitious divines in the church of Christ, who care for nothing but their own temporal advancement. Such men, of course, (if there be any such in

our church—and who doubts that there are?) would fight *for* the seminary, if they supposed their own interest would be promoted by it, and they would fight *against* it for the same reason. Every reader of ecclesiastical history—nay, every man at all conversant with the world, very well knows that the Christian church has, at all times, acknowledged among her members and among her servants—men—who, under the guise of religion, of honour, and friendship, could deceive, and slander, and betray, and persecute; in order to compass a favourite project or to elevate themselves or their partisans to posts of honour and profit. I tell you there have been such men—such ministers of the gospel. And, who will affirm that there are none such now? There was a Judas—and there was a Simon Magus, even in the days of Christ and of his Apostles. And Judas and Simon have had their successors in every age. The prince of darkness has need of them still: and, it is believed, that his legions may boast of as formidable a number at the present day, as at any former period. In regard to such of them as unhappily belong to our church—I add—let them take their course.—They are obliged to preach correctly; and ostensibly at least to defend, inculcate and practise the religion of Christ. I say they are obliged to do this, through fear of the censure and discipline of the church judicatories under which they minister. And here is our peculiar and strong safeguard. It is not because the clergy are not liable to corruption, and not prone to seek after riches, and honours, and power;—that I assert the establish-

ment of the seminary will not be dangerous in these respects. But because of the singular excellence of both our ecclesiastical and political institutions which renders the eventual usurpation or acquisition of political power physically impossible.

Therefore, be not alarmed by the admission which truth has constrained me to make in regard to some of my brethren. But for your comfort, remember that the moment any minister begins to depart from the faith and to teach strange doctrine; that moment he will be called to an account: and if his error be found to be radical, and if he persist in holding it; he will inevitably be suspended or deposed from the sacred office. Again, if his conduct be openly immoral and unchristian, he will be dealt with according to the nature of the offence. So that all the clergy of our denomination must either be honest, pious, consistent men; or they must be consummate hypocrites. No increase of their numbers can alter the nature of these facts. Doubly guarded therefore is our church:—and no better or stronger guarantee can you have that your money will be honestly appropriated to the objects intended, and successfully devoted to the cause of religion, than you have in this instance. And I venture to assure you that there is no way in which you can bestow your superfluous wealth; or contribute a portion of the hard earnings of industry and frugality with half the prospect of doing extensive and permanent good. It is not *one* minister for whose benefit you are urged to give. But consider what immense good a single faithful minister may effect in an

ordinary lifetime. Look among our congregations which have enjoyed the labours of worthy pastors for a number of years. Select one for your examination. Count up the number of those who have been brought into the fold of Christ since their pastor was first installed over them: the number who have adorned religion by a consistent walk and conversation; and who have died in the faith, blessing God for the labours, warnings, instructions, and prayers of their beloved minister. See the order, morality, and intelligence which everywhere meet the eye; and form a striking contrast between this and a neighbouring congregation which has, for a length of years, been destitute of a pastor, or cursed with an unfaithful one.

Suppose further, that instead of a settled pastor, he should prove a zealous missionary to the heathen, like Brainerd:—or to the world, like Whitefield.—Would you think your money misapplied which had contributed to his education, and been instrumental in thrusting him into the Lord's vineyard?

But here you are favoured with the high privilege of lending to the Lord your money, not for the support of one candidate for the holy office; but for a whole college. Not for a limited term of years; but for a permanent fountain, whence, we trust, streams will continue to flow to gladden the city of our God; to make the desert and the wilderness to bud and blossom as the rose, until the church militant shall be merged in the church triumphant; and the whole company of the Lord's redeemed be safely landed in the heavenly Canaan.

To be allowed to lend a helping hand to this glorious work, I tell you is a privilege for which future generations will almost envy, while they bless, the charitable few of the present day, who have honestly given their offering, or who may yet give it to this object.

Shall it be told, a hundred years hence, in the annals of the American Church, that, at this flourishing period of the Republic, forty years after the achievement of our independence:—after having expended millions of money on the public edifices of our Metropolis:—after having lavished millions on schools, academies, colleges, roads, bridges, canals, forts, ships, armories, arsenals, manufactories, and a thousand other objects of a public or of a private character:—that an attempt was made by that very numerous and wealthy denomination of Christians, *the Presbyterians;* under the most solemn sanctions of their most august ecclesiastical judicatory, to establish a seminary for the education of pious youth for the gospel ministry: that the work was actually begun and carried to a certain extent, under the full belief, that the piety, zeal and wealth of so large and respectable a body as that to which the appeal was made, would never suffer the pecuniary means to be wanting for its completion:—but that nevertheless, after many painful and long-continued struggles for some ten or twenty years, it scarcely obtained so firm a footing as to ensure the hope of its permanent stability?

And shall all the little illiberal reasons which are now assigned:—all the paltry motives which now sway the mind of its adversaries, appear on the faithful page of story to the disgrace of *the church,* whose ministers, in

that ever-memorable crisis which *tried men's souls*, boldly stood forth the determined champions of independence? For it ought never to be forgotten by those who asperse their political integrity, that the Presbyterian clergy were pre-eminently devoted to the popular principles of *seventy-six*. Although they are sometimes pointed at now as the dangerous foes of that very system of equal liberty which themselves or predecessors laboured to establish:—and on this ground the people are cautioned to guard against their arts and intrigues, and especially against their growing numbers and influence.—Yet let the honest historian tell that among the original founders of the seminary, was, not only the advocate, but the soldier of the Revolution; who, after bearing arms in his country's cause, enlisted under the banners of the cross: and after spending the vigour of manhood and much of the wisdom of age in the service of the great captain of salvation; proposed to his fellow-patriots, to his younger brethren, and to his country; the establishment of an institution whose benefits should be commensurate with the wants and as durable as the existence of the church. And that this was the enlightened plan which provoked the opposition and the jealousy of so large a portion of the community. Shall such be the representation which candour must convey to future ages? Forbid it decency:—forbid it the honour of my country:—forbid it the spirit of the Presbyterian church:—forbid it, great King of Zion, who turnest the hearts of the children of men as the rivers of waters are turned; who canst bring light out of darkness, and make the most untoward

events work together for the prosperity of the gospel of peace! In thy hands do we humbly leave our infant school: and to thy smiles, patronage, and benediction, do we devoutly and confidently commend it.

I feel much on this subject; and lament that I have so recently turned my thoughts to it with any reference to the present occasion, as not to have been able to do justice to my own views and wishes. For it would not have been, under any advantages, within the scope of my poor ability, to do justice to the importance and grandeur of the subject. I must beg my audience therefore not to impute to the weakness of the cause, the weakness of the arguments by which it has been attempted to maintain it. The cause I am confident is a good one. It has, and I trust will ever have, the ablest advocates.

To you, respected fathers and beloved brothers in the holy ministry, now convened to consult the welfare of the church within our Presbyterial bounds, I most earnestly recommend the nurture and tender rearing of this plant of the Lord's planting. Never lose sight of it. Let it be the subject of your most fervent prayers and intercessions. Be its warm, undisguised advocates whereever you go. Throw all your influence into the scale in its favour. Let your people know that you are its decided, zealous friends. Put it into the hearts of the benevolent and the wealthy to give liberally of their substance whenever an occasion offers. And you will yourselves be astonished at the result of a few years' patient, prudent, well-timed, vigorous efforts in this infinitely momentous concern.

There is now a grand movement in the camp of Israel. Arise, and come forth to the help of the Lord against the mighty.

Behold the progress of heresy and infidelity under the disguise of rational Christianity. See the artifice of the great destroyer in these latter days. He has commissioned his emissaries to assume the garb and the functions of ministers of the gospel, that they may the more effectually sap the foundation of the whole Christian edifice. He has enlisted talents, and learning, and indefatigable enterprise in this work of desolation. He has taught the deistical scoffer at revelation to step a little aside from his accustomed track: and to come forward in a new shape, but with the same malignant hostility against the truth. He is now willing to be esteemed a catholic liberal Christian. But he rejects the essential divinity of the Saviour; the depravity of human nature; the doctrine of the atonement, and of justification by faith. Or, he is a Christian without holding one principle of the Christian religion which can distinguish it from the religion of nature. Modern Unitarianism, which is everywhere insinuating itself into the hearts of men naturally predisposed to its reception, because it is exactly suited to the natural character of men, is more to be dreaded than any species of infidelity ever yet avowed. It is a deadly enemy wearing the mask and the name of a friend.*

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* In his remarks on the Unitarians, the author may be thought to have expressed himself incautiously, perhaps uncharitably. They

To be able to meet such an enemy on equal ground, requires much care and preparation. Many of the teachers of this heresy are thoroughly skilled in scholastic theology, logic, and metaphysics:—in history, antiquities, philology, and modern science:—well versed in the ancient languages:—bold and subtle biblical critics:—prepared to take advantage of an imprudent or incautious adversary:—and thus to triumph over truth itself in the eyes of superficial observers when their sophistry seems to get the victory over its unskilful defender. Such wily disputants may now be met with in almost every section of our country. We must send into the field men sufficiently learned and disciplined fairly to encounter

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style themselves Christians: and many of them, no doubt, are sincere in their professions. Trinitarians generally, however, do not think them *fairly* entitled to the appellation of *Christian:* and that the direct tendency of their principles is to subvert the true Christian system, whether they are aware of it or not. One thing is certain; if *their* creed be true, *ours* is *fatally* erroneous. While therefore we *believe* the doctrines which we inculcate, they, in their infinite liberality, will excuse us for holding them up to view as dangerous enemies of *the faith once delivered to the saints.* The *Christ* in whom we trust, and from whom we choose to be denominated *Christians,* we believe to be God as well as man. The Christ whom they acknowledge as the founder of their religion, and from whom they assume the name of Christians, they believe to have been a *mere man*; or, at most a mere creature. Both parties, it is evident, cannot prefer just claims to the *same* name. It is admitted that the controversy about the *name* depends after all on the real nature and character of the Saviour. And that this controversy cannot be decided by ecclesiastical courts or councils: nor by any human confessions, or articles, or creeds, or systems, or authorities whatever—but solely by the Holy Scriptures in the original languages.

them. A good, honest, well-meaning, but superficially-taught person will not do. Such a man had better not put his strength or rather his weakness to the test on any such occasion. He may be useful in his place. But we must have men who are qualified to maintain the truth against every gainsayer.—Who can defend the faith once delivered to the saints against the most powerful assailants. Now ministers thus qualified are not to be met with every day. They are not the production of chance. They do not grow into existence as a mere matter of course. And it is possible that, at the present time, the number would not be found to be very great of those who could successfully or reputably contend with the leading Socinians in our country. This is mortifying.—But the evil admits of a remedy. Although the orthodox churches generally have been negligent, culpably negligent, in regard to the education of young ministers; so much so as to give advantage to our more wary adversaries; yet we may retrace our steps, or rather commence anew, and do our future work better.

Foster then this precious seminary, whence we may speedily hope to see issue multitudes of ardent, vigorous, able, well-furnished youth, who shall have no reason to dread the face of any foe however fierce or crafty.

So much has recently been done for the propagation of the gospel at home and abroad, that men seem to be satisfied, and satiated, if I may so express it, with their own exertions. They seem to imagine that the victory is already gained. That the religion of Jesus is so rapidly extending its influence, as to promise the speedy com-

mencement of the millennial glory and universal reign of the Prince of peace. But while we would not despise the day of small things, nor damp the ardour of those actively engaged in the great work; we are constrained to acknowledge that our own prospect, from a sober examination of facts, is not quite so cheering, nor our hopes so sanguine.

The world is yet, in a great measure, to be Christianized. Vastly the larger part of it is still in the hands of the enemy. Almost the whole of Asia and Africa, including the islands of the Indian and Southern oceans, with very large portions of Europe and America, are still Pagan or Mohammedan. And even those countries which are denominated Christian, present a picture of ignorance, superstition, and vice, which must cause the real Christian's heart to bleed at the view of it. Italy, France, Spain, Portugal; with a full moiety of the rest of Europe:—all *South*, with extensive provinces in *North* America, though styled Christian, exhibit probably very few and very feeble evidences of the influence of *genuine* Christianity. These are yet to be converted to the faith.

But even in those countries, where the truth (it is supposed) has been better understood and more extensively obeyed: as in Great Britain, Holland, Switzerland, and the United States of America; how few real Christians in any age, or in any district at this moment, could be numbered? How small the company of the *truly pious* could be discovered for instance in London, Edinburgh, Geneva, Philadelphia, or New York:—small, I mean, compared with the whole population of those cities? How

small the number in this State; in this county; in this town; in this congregation?

Verily, this is not a time for lukewarmness and inaction. Never was a louder call addressed to the sympathy and the courage of the Christian soldier:—never was a juster and more pressing demand made on the liberality of the rich and the pious.

I hail this as a new era in the progress of the American Presbyterian Church. I hail it as the harbinger of good; in giving birth to an institution which, under God, shall serve as the grand bulwark of evangelical truth and piety to the latest generations. Honoured in the church will be the names of its benefactors when the names of heroes and sages shall be forgotten. In heaven they shall be repaid with interest for every exertion, sacrifice, and donation which they now have the courage and the faith to make in its behalf. Did men but know the true value of money they would not hoard it up to rust in their coffers, or lie useless on their hands, when it might be made instrumental in diffusing peace and joy throughout the region and shadow of death:—in gilding the path of thousands to the realms of glory who are at this moment wandering upon the dark mountains like sheep without a shepherd—and in gladdening the hearts of millions yet unborn. In this view pre-eminently, gold has a charm and a worth, which the ordinary worldling cannot discern or comprehend.

Happy the man, who, while he is prospered in business, knows how to bestow to the best account the fruits of his prosperity. Verily, he shall be prospered more abund-

antly in this life: and in the life to come he shall wear a brighter crown than all the wealth of created worlds could purchase.

Had it been my purpose on this occasion to pronounce the eulogium of our seminary, instead of urging the reasons *a priori* for your support of it:—I might have directed your attention to the good effects which it has already produced as a happy presage of the future. The tree is known by its fruits. The experiment then has been partially but faithfully made. At this moment the sons of the seminary are before the public and in the service of the church. From Detroit to New Orleans they have proclaimed the glad news of salvation to thousands, with a zeal and acceptance, which have reflected the highest honour on the place of their education:—and which, until we have melancholy evidence to the contrary, must effectually put to the blush, if not to silence, the illiberal clamours of frigid, calculating, envious opposition.

Has not the blessing of the Almighty already visibly crowned the plans and the labours of the friends of this institution? Can this fact be denied or concealed? Does it not speak volumes to the understanding and the heart of all who are capable of comprehending or feeling? And who is there so hardened, or so warped in his sentiments, or uncharitable in his views, as still to withhold his approbation or his aid? If any, it is to be feared, that the love of the Father is not in them: and that the love of immortal souls has never warmed and animated their bosoms!

"Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?

Feed my lambs.—Feed my sheep." Yes, blessed Jesus, thy true disciples will obey thy commands. They will cheerfully follow thy example in doing good; and delight in every enterprise and in every sacrifice, by which they can most effectually and successfully promote the glory of thy name, and the happiness of their fellow-men!

THE DUTY

OF

OBSERVING THE SABBATH.

[COLLEGE CHAPEL, PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY, 1821.]

THE DUTY OF OBSERVING THE SABBATH.

EXPLAINED AND ENFORCED IN A SERMON ADDRESSED MORE PARTICULARLY TO THE YOUNG.*

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.—*Exodus*, xx. 8.

The moral law, as comprehended in the ten commandments, is of universal and perpetual obligation. It is that declaration of God's will, which points out to mankind in every age and place, their whole duty to him and to one another. It is not to be regarded as a mean of justification by fallen rebellious creatures: or as encouraging them, in the slightest degree, to hope for pardon and eternal life through their own obedience. No mere man has ever yet obeyed this law, and we are assured that no man can obey it. But if he could, it is evident that no future obedience, however perfect, could atone for past transgression. And every man living must be conscious that he has transgressed: and that he is therefore justly condemned.

Salvation, as we are taught in the gospel, is wholly of grace. The law however is binding on us as a perfect rule of life and duty. The gospel, so far from destroying, does most powerfully sanction and enforce the law. Christians therefore can never consistently plead for any mitigation of its rigour. But while they acknowledge its claims, and honestly strive to comply with them: they will humbly rest on the Lord Jesus alone for deliverance from its curse and for glory hereafter.

* Delivered in the College chapel, Princeton, N. J., 1821.

To one of the commandments of this righteous law, I beg leave to invite your serious attention at this time. I shall take no notice of the various controversies and opinions which have arisen respecting the Sabbath. I leave human speculations and theories for the plain unerring word of inspiration, which unequivocally declares that God requires the seventh portion of time to be held sacred. "Six days (says he) shalt thou labour, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God."

After the resurrection of our Saviour, and in reference to that glorious event, the first day of the week was substituted in place of the seventh, as appears from several passages of the New Testament: and as is confirmed by the uniform practice of the Christian church from the Apostles' days to the present time. No doubt can therefore be entertained of our obligations to observe it. Nor is the authority of the fourth commandment, in any degree, impaired by this commutation of the day. For we do in fact remember the Sabbath day, when, having attended to our secular business six days, we conscientiously devote the seventh to the Lord.

In further addressing you, brethren, I shall endeavour—

1. To present you with a general view of the duty enjoined in the text, and

2. To suggest some reasons or motives to induce you to fulfil it.

1. We are to inquire how the Sabbath is to be sancti-

fied, agreeably to the real spirit and full extent of the divine command.

Under this head, I shall, first, briefly notice what is forbidden: and then, secondly, what is enjoined.

First. "In it, (i.e. in the Sabbath) thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates." Here every kind of worldly business is absolutely prohibited. Not merely such works as are, at all times, sinful: but even such as are, on other days, lawful. There is no limitation or modification of this precept expressed or implied in all the Bible which can be pleaded, except in behalf of those works which may be fairly denominated works of necessity and mercy. The line is clearly drawn. The language is too plain to be misunderstood. Whatever passes under the name of labour, or amusement, or recreation: whatever is foreign to religion, or has not a direct tendency to glorify God, and to advance the spiritual interest of ourselves and others, is solemnly interdicted to all classes and descriptions of men.

Heads of families are made responsible for every irregularity allowed in their houses. They are commanded, as far as it is practicable, to restrain their children, their servants, and even the stranger, or the occasional visiter who lodges under their roof or partakes of their hospitality, from every violation of this holy day. Nay, more—they are not permitted to employ the very cattle; the labouring beasts, for any ordinary purpose. These must rest also. The tender mercies of the Lord are

over all his works. And though to man is given the earth with the fulness thereof: yet he is required to be merciful to the meanest animal under his control. For none are too mean to be beneath the notice and protection of the Almighty Creator and Father of all.

The slave and the brute, however they may minister to our wants and our comfort during the week, are exempted on the Sabbath, from the pains of servitude, by the Majesty of heaven. And wo to that man who dares employ them in any way contrary to the obvious import of the commandment.

This particular merits a very serious consideration. For though not often adverted to, yet nothing is more evident, than that the Sabbath is most shamefully profaned in this respect. Visiting, excursions for pleasure, journeys on business, and travelling of every description, may be witnessed, I had almost said, more frequently on this day than on any other day. Of some parts of our country, I know this to be literally true. Many are in the habit of imposing unnecessary burthens on their servants, and of withholding from them reasonable Christian privileges. This is most ungenerous treatment, to say no more. But I am warranted by high authority in adding, that it is a cruel infringement of their rights as granted them by the Sovereign of nature, to sweeten, in some measure, the bitter cup of bondage; by affording them, not only stated seasons of rest from manual labour, but an opportunity of acquiring religious knowledge: of engaging in religious worship: and of preparing for another and a better world. Is there a master in this

assembly; or one who is likely to become a master? Behold, the Lord is saying to thee,—"Neither thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant shall do any work on the Sabbath day."

But servants have their duties to perform also. The command reaches to them as well as to others. They are as much bound to improve religious, and all other privileges and means, as masters are to furnish them. And here truth constrains me to add, that, in reference to this part of our country at least, servants in general are favoured with opportunities and privileges of which, it is apprehended, they do not avail themselves to the extent which their duty and their interest require. The Sabbath is given them: the house of God is open to them: and gratuitous instruction is kindly provided for them: and do they profit as they might and as they ought by this indulgence and by this benevolence? Do they keep holy the Sabbath; and honour the institutions of religion; and live obedient to the gospel whose light they enjoy? If not, their guilt and criminality must lie at their own door.—And if not speedily repented of, the punishment due to the unprofitable servant who knew his Lord's will and would not perform it, will be inflicted on them by the common Master and Judge of us all.

I have said that every species of labour is forbidden except works of necessity and mercy. And I am aware of the abuse to which the exception is often liable. There are many persons in religious communities who are impatient of Sabbath restrictions, and who are yet desirous of securing the confidence and approbation of

their fellow-men, by appearing, if not pious, at least the friends of piety, who are exceedingly prone to take refuge under the general plea of necessity for whatever they may choose to do on the Sabbath. This very convenient plea too is frequently urged by the pious themselves, or by the *reputed* pious, when it probably could not stand the test of a moment's candid scrutiny. Are not most of us, Christian brethren, culpable in this matter? Have *we* not too many works of *necessity* to perform on Sunday? Do we not suffer ourselves to be troubled and occupied about many things which might be avoided? There is no great difficulty in ascertaining what is a work of necessity, and what is not; if we will take the pains honestly to examine. And even if a doubtful case should occur, it is better to err on the safe side than on the wrong. None ought to be esteemed works of necessity and therefore lawful, except such as could not be foreseen and disposed of the day before; and such as cannot be delayed till the day after the Sabbath. Were this general rule (which has the sanction of the best writers on the subject) strictly applied to every particular instance, the path of duty would soon become so plain and visible that we could not mistake it. But what is the fact? Do we not, by our numberless trivial avocations which have become so common as to be mere matters of course, almost lose sight of the great end of this holy day; or, at least, deprive ourselves of most of its precious benefits? To make the Sabbath a kind of half-way day: neither resting nor working, and yet busied with many things of little moment: neither engaging

with the whole heart in the duties of religion, nor venturing to disregard them so far as to enter decidedly upon our ordinary worldly business or pleasures, is in effect to lose the day altogether. Our bodies are not rested, nor our hearts refreshed. And while we make a *show* of obeying, and actually endure all the pains of a constrained obedience; we do entirely fail of that honest dutiful obedience which alone will be accepted as fulfilling the command.

Thou shalt not do any work. These words convey a higher meaning than is generally supposed. And the severity with which the slightest violation of the precept was punished, under the Mosaic economy, is an ample comment on them. "Whosoever doeth any work on the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death," saith the Lord. And among the numerous crimes with which the children of Israel are charged, from time to time, during a long series of apostacies and rebellions, none are mentioned with more emphatic disapprobation: none are represented as of a more heinous nature, than breaches of the Sabbath. It is the Lord's day, and he is jealous of it. Take heed then, brethren, lest you provoke his anger by any unnecessary works: by idle ungodly conversation: by worldly thoughts: by any kind of unhallowed recreation or carnal indulgence.

Secondly. Let us now take a hasty view of the positive part of the precept: or of the duties which we are commanded to perform.

A bare cessation from secular labour is not the whole that is enjoined. Mere inaction,—absolute idleness,—

a temporary suspension of the ordinary pursuits of the week,—is not sanctifying the Sabbath. Sanctifying or keeping holy, not only imports a separation from common use, but likewise a consecration to a sacred or religious use. It is a holy resting that God requires of us. An engagedness of soul in his service. This we insist on the rather, because many interpret the precept literally, and maintain that the chief design of the Sabbath is to afford corporeal rest: that after six days of active labour we may be invigorated for new exertions. It derogates from the dignity of the divine character and government, however, to suppose that this should be the only or the principal object of a law delivered in so solemn and august a manner: at least, so far as rational and moral agents are in question. It is an error which is abundantly refuted throughout the Scriptures. Here we learn that the Sabbath is not only a day of rest, but of devotion. A day peculiarly appropriated to the worship of God. A day for spiritual work: for attending to the welfare of the immortal soul without distraction: and with that calmness, deliberation, and earnestness, which a work of such infinite concernment reasonably demands. It is evident then that we ought always to make such a previous disposition of our worldly affairs as to be able to exclude them entirely from our minds, that we may enter with alacrity and ardour upon the delightful exercises of the Sabbath. It is the homage of the heart which God demands of us; and this only will he accept. "My son," he says, "give me thy heart." He beholds sin in everything which is not done with a pure and honest heart.

The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. And sanctifying it does not consist in the mere regarding of it as a day in itself particularly holy and specifically different from other days; and in manifesting for it a kind of superstitious reverence, as if it were capable of communicating to us any spiritual blessing, or of averting deserved wrath. The Sabbath becomes a blessing only when it is rightly improved. St. John, we read, was in the Spirit on the Lord's day. He was not merely under the ordinary influences of the holy Spirit, who dwelt in him at all times, but he was in that heavenly and happy frame of mind, in which all Christians ought to be; and something of which they must experience, or the day cannot be hallowed or enjoyed. The Christian must take delight in all the ordinances of divine institution, or they will prove burthensome and unprofitable.

It would be difficult, if not impossible, to state clearly and definitely, all the external duties which are, or may be incumbent on us, each Lord's day. These may be greatly varied by circumstances. But in whatever situation we may be placed: however we may differ from each other in appearance or in action, yet the same temper of heart must be possessed, and will be manifested by all God's children. If our hearts be right with God, we cannot be backward or lukewarm in his service. From the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh.

The Sabbath is a day of grateful remembrance; especially of the stupendous works of creation and

redemption. It is a day of anticipation: of looking forward to that holy and eternal Sabbath of rest and blessedness which remaineth for the people of God.

Prayer — meditation — self-examination — reading the Bible and other pious books—a solemn and regular attendance on the ordinances and service of the sanctuary—exhorting, counselling, and instructing those intrusted to our care—edifying conversation with Christian friends: together with a cheerful compliance with all the claims of mercy and charity, which cannot as seasonably and beneficially be fulfilled on another day; constitute a brief summary of the ordinary duties of the Christian Sabbath.

But there is danger of error here also. Men are prone to extremes: and it is difficult to preserve that happy medium in which truth and duty will generally be found to lie. There is a species of austerity, approaching to the morose and churlish, which some very good people think essential to the proper observance of the Sabbath. Many individuals, and some entire sects of Christians, carry their ideas of rigour on this subject much further than others; and much further than is warranted by Scripture. Often to the extreme of absolutely converting the day into a season of painful mortification and penance: to the extreme of excluding from their presence, and from their houses, everything of the cheerful, agreeable, and social: and I may add, everything of the kindly and benevolent character.

Such was the extreme to which the Jewish doctors had arrived in our Saviour's time. But *he*, who was Lord

of the Sabbath, taught and practised very differently: as appears from many declarations and facts recorded in his gospel. "And it came to pass on the Sabbath, (says Luke,) that he entered into the synagogue and taught: and there was a man whose right hand was withered. And the Scribes and Pharisees watched him, whether he would heal on the Sabbath day: that they might find an accusation against him. But he knew their thoughts, and said to the man which had the withered hand, rise up and stand forth in the midst. And he arose and stood forth. Then said Jesus unto them, I will ask you one thing, is it lawful on the Sabbath days to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it?" And, on another occasion, he put a similar question to the Lawyers and Pharisees—"saying, is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day? Which of you shall have an ox or an ass fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the Sabbath day?"—Thus arguing from an acknowledged case of necessity when property only was in jeopardy, to the still higher claim of mercy and charity, when the life and comfort of a fellow-mortal were at stake. The lawfulness of the first had never been questioned by these captious formalists, while the latter was condemned as a flagrant enormity. Our Saviour exposed this absurd inconsistency:—delivered a purer doctrine:—and set an example of doing good on the Sabbath, which none need be afraid to imitate. And when we recollect that "pure religion and undefiled, before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep *ourselves* unspotted from the world;"—we may

learn the nature of our duty, and be animated to the performance of many charitable acts on the Sabbath, whatever the *righteous overmuch* may choose to think or say of our conduct. In following Christ we shall be safe. In exhibiting the same meek, amiable, cheerful, benevolent temper which he, at all times and under all circumstances, displayed: we shall relish the calm heavenly pleasures of religion ourselves: recommend it to others: and be instrumental of good to all around us. In this there is nothing selfish; nothing gloomy, painful, or austere. How different an aspect does religion wear as exemplified in the daily walk and conversation of the Saviour, from that which it assumes in the frigid systems and morose practice of many of its loudest advocates at the present day?

To do *good* then is lawful on the Sabbath. The closet, the family, and the sanctuary have their claims.—But the poor and the wretched have theirs also. And no day is better calculated to dispense good of a certain kind to these than the Sabbath. I admit that whatever good can be done for others, as effectually during the week, does not properly present itself as a Sabbath day's duty. Thus food, raiment, and fuel may be furnished to the necessitous generally without interfering with the devotions of the Sabbath: and of course ought to be thus furnished. But there are some things which will not be done at all, if not done on the Sabbath. Let one case be specified as a sample of the rest.

Sunday-schools have been found by fair experiment to be the most efficient means of benefiting the poor; by

imparting to their children useful knowledge, imbuing them with virtuous principles, and training them up to habits of industry, economy and piety. I advert to this subject, on the present occasion, the rather, because there are some men not destitute of charity, and of considerable influence in religious society, who condemn Sunday-schools as an infringement of the Sabbath, and therefore sinful. It is not my purpose to canvass the merits of the controversy. But whoever will candidly investigate the subject: look to the precepts and practice of the Saviour: consider the nature of the Christian Sabbath and of the Christian religion: contemplate the circumstances and character of the poor: the important object which these benevolent institutions have in view: and the immense good which they have already effected,—cannot long remain hostile to their interests, or censure them as encroaching on the sanctity of the Sabbath. The Sabbath is the only day on which these friendless and too long neglected children of indigence, misery, and vice, could be collected in any considerable numbers: and the only day in which, many who are able and willing, could afford to bestow their labour for this benevolent purpose. It then fairly becomes a Sabbath day's duty, or it is no duty at all. This is one of the ways in which the most enlightened Christian philanthropists in the *old* world and in the *new*, fully believe it to be lawful and expedient to do good on the Sabbath. It is one, among the many plans which have been proposed in this age of benevolent enterprise for gradually elevating the moral character and improving the *temporal*, no less than

the *eternal*, welfare of the poor, which has received the most decided and hearty approbation of those best capable of judging: and by them it has been pronounced superior to every other plan that has hitherto been tried or suggested. May the Father of mercies ever bless and prosper those engaged in this good work: and give them that most grateful of all rewards, the pleasure of beholding multitudes of the ignorant and the prodigal rising to usefulness, and virtue, and happiness under their friendly discipline and faithful instruction!

Nor ought the rich to despise the benefits which their children also may derive from this charitable source.

The religion of Jesus, my friends, has no tendency to weaken the ties which bind mankind to each other, by inspiring a selfish, solitary disposition. It enjoins on us lives of active usefulness. It breathes a spirit of universal benevolence. Should any therefore, under pretence of extraordinary piety, be satisfied with paying tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin, while he omits the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith:—should he, under pretence of a conscientious regard to the divine commands, refuse on the Sabbath to administer to the relief of a suffering brother, or to engage in those works of charity which are obviously proper: he would abundantly manifest that the spirit which was in Christ is not in him.

Again:—public worship is an ordinance of God which the faithful in every age have delighted to celebrate on the Sabbath. It is one of the most precious privileges of the Sabbath: and it prefers the highest possible

claims to our regard. Many however neglect the house of God altogether. Though living in sight of it, they never enter it. Such persons, and there are many such, do themselves an injury which eternity alone will enable them fully to comprehend and to appreciate. Others are ready to absent themselves on the most trivial pretences, and are glad of any kind of excuse to stay at home: when, probably, the same pretexts would never be thought of during the week as sufficient to keep them from any favourite pursuit or amusement. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear!

Others imagine that keeping the Sabbath day holy implies nothing more than going to church. They are ready enough therefore to perform this duty in their own way. In some places, going to church, seems to take precedence of, or to supersede all other duties. Now as we are naturally disposed to do whatever happens to be fashionable and honourable: and as we greatly desire, in some way or other, to appease our consciences and to conciliate the favour of God: so it is not wonderful that anything in which pleasure, the esteem of the world, and the supposed approbation of heaven unite, should be extremely grateful to carnal nature. Men may go to church, and be highly entertained and gratified, who, but for this mode of getting time off their hands, would be totally at a loss for a Sabbath day's employment at home,—should they unfortunately be detained at home. Even the intervals between the public services hang heavily on their hands. The closet has no charms for them; and the Bible is seldom, perhaps, never opened.

They depend on their minister for their creed,—as well as for their devotional feelings, and exercises, and sentiments. Hence they are ever ready to flee solitude and themselves, by resorting to the sanctuary as a refuge from reflection; from remorse; from the disquietude of a mind unoccupied, and which nevertheless cannot be at ease. Such persons overlook or disregard everything for what may be termed the luxuries of the church. It is a species of dissipation to which they become addicted: and which frequently unfits them for every active religious duty and for all private devotion.

Others think that if they go to church *once* on the Sabbath, they are at liberty to dispose of the remainder of the day as they please. Some persons too enter the temple of the most High God with motives very little different from those which lead them, on other days, to places of public resort and fashionable amusement. But I forbear.—These general hints may suffice. I dismiss this branch of the subject with a word of caution and of counsel.

Let none flatter themselves that a partial constrained performance of duty: or any meager frivolous pretences for its omission, will ever avail them before that God who cannot be deceived and who will not be mocked. Let none imagine that the most scrupulous attention to any particular duty will be accepted as an equivalent for the neglect of other duties equally obligatory. Let none presume that God who looketh not to the outward appearance, but to the heart, can be more pleased in beholding men idle than at work:—or that he can be

worshipped by those whose thoughts are totally occupied by the world any better than if their hands also were employed.—Or that there is any virtue in abstaining from labour; whether this be done from education, or habit, or from a regard to public sentiment, the law of the land, or even the law of God: while they indulge in a variety of amusements, in their own nature quite as vain, and, in the sight of God, quite as culpable. Let none calculate on meriting the divine favour by their own good deeds: by going the regular round of duty which they suppose to be enjoined in Scripture or by usage on every Sabbath:—whether they obey with the spirit of the proud Pharisee or of the trembling slave. None of these things will do. There is but one course which we can safely take. And that is the straight and narrow way pointed out by the Spirit of truth and holiness. If we do not cordially love the whole law of God, and the Saviour who has satisfied its demands against us, we can never obey a single precept to the glory of his name or to the comfort of our own hearts. "Blessed is the man that doeth this, (saith the Lord,) and the son of man that layeth hold on it; that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil."

2. I proceed to suggest some reasons or motives for the faithful observance of the Christian Sabbath.

First:—and above all. It is the solemn command of Almighty God. Creatures have no right to question his authority: or the wisdom and equity of his laws. Here I might stop. No higher motive can be urged. No

stronger or more satisfactory reason can be assigned or conceived for our observance of any precept, than that it is the will of God that we do observe it. Let the will of God be clearly ascertained, and our duty is decided. And there is no appeal from this decision. Whether we approve it or not:—whether we relish it or not:—enters not into the account. But though this single consideration, which is paramount to all others, ought ever to silence the murmuring and the cavilling tongue, yet are we permitted humbly to examine into the nature, ends, and uses of all the divine dispensations towards us. God is not an unreasonable or hard master. He has dealt with us as intelligent beings. He has revealed to us his will and our duty for the wisest and most gracious purposes. And these, in some good measure, we have light sufficient to discover, if we do not proudly shut our eyes against it. The Sabbath is not an arbitrary institution. It is specially adapted to our nature and circumstances. And altogether calculated to promote our best interests in time and through eternity. As will appear:—

Secondly. When we consider, that since there is a future state of rewards and punishments: that since there will be a day of righteous retribution when we shall be dealt with according to our conduct in this life; it must be of the last importance to maintain a knowledge of the true God and of his holy religion.

I have no argument at present with any who reject, or slight, or pervert the sacred Scriptures. I address men who profess to believe the Bible to be the word of God:

the only sure guide to future happiness. And I assert, without the hazard of successful contradiction, that had we not stated seasons for private and public worship: stated seasons for studying the glorious truths which God has revealed: stated seasons for learning our duty and for cherishing a spirit of devotion and piety; we should soon relapse into all the darkness and errors of heathenism.

The heart of man is naturally estranged from God, and at enmity with him. It does not seek to find him unless called upon by the dispensations of Providence, or by means specially appropriated to the acquisition of sacred knowledge. Immersed in the cares, labours, and pleasures of the world, we should, without the recurrence of fixed and stated periods to remind us of our duty and our dependence, soon forget our Creator and our Judge. The Bible would become a sealed book: and every vestige of the pure religion of Christ would be obliterated from our minds. It is well known that the mass of mankind, even in the most enlightened Christian countries, do never think of attending to religious subjects except on the Sabbath. It is in the sanctuary and from the stated ministers of the gospel, that they learn those soul-purifying principles, which are infinitely more efficient than any human laws in restraining their vicious propensities, and in making them honest virtuous citizens. Abolish the Sabbath, and you leave the multitude to grope their way in the dark. You destroy their only source of information:—the only safeguard of their morals.

Religion, it should be recollected, is not a matter of mere speculation: neither is it a system of maxims or principles which may be suddenly impressed on the understanding or treasured up in the mind. It does not consist in the performance of a few duties, or in the observance of a few ceremonies. Religion is a settled disposition; a temper; a habit; an entire devotion of soul to the holy service of the living God; whom it must be our interest and our pleasure in all things to obey.

But how is this spiritual, this heavenly frame of mind, so contrary to that which the world inspires, and to that which men naturally possess, to be acquired? Most assuredly, not without much labour and much pains on our part. For though God only can change the heart and implant the gracious seed of holiness; yet he does not usually work miracles for his creatures. He prepares them gradually for the world of glory. They must advance step by step in the good work of sanctification. He has pointed out to them the way and furnished them the means; and it is their duty to make a diligent and a faithful use of them; or they need never expect to obtain the blessed end. It is preposterous to think of making high attainments in virtue: or of growing in grace, in wisdom, in holiness, while we remain careless and indolent. No man ever calculates to excel in any human art, profession, or science, without constant discipline and unremitting efforts. Behold, then, brethren, the infinite value of the Sabbath. It is the time which God has given you to undergo a course of spiritual discipline, if I may so

speak. To train you up in wisdom's ways, that you may, in due time, be made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. To cultivate those habits and dispositions which shall qualify you for heaven, and without which you cannot be happy in heaven.

These observations, (though absolutely and universally true in all their force and extent,) are made at this time with a more particular reference to the conduct of the enemies of revelation, who are continually seeking, in the most artful manner, to lessen our respect for the Sabbath and to prompt to its violation. They are perfectly aware that this is one of the main pillars of Christianity: and that if they can succeed in undermining it, the whole edifice must fall of course. They know that the Sabbath is the life of religion. That it preserves the knowledge and diffuses the influence of truth among mankind. And hence their insidious efforts to bring it into contempt. They have already done much, in various parts of the Christian world, towards effecting their impious purpose. Their corrupting principles have extended further than most of us probably are aware of. They have taken deep root in some sections of our own country.

The Sabbath is most grossly profaned in this land of light and liberty. This profanation, in many places, has become so common as to be scarcely noticed. It prevails among all ranks. It has ceased to be regarded as criminal or dishonourable. In such places, the Sabbath has degenerated into a mere holiday of mirth and frolic, for the lower classes and servants. And into a day of fashionable amusement and convivial pleasures for the

higher and more wealthy classes. This has been denominated one of the crying sins of the Republic. And it is regarded, among others, as an alarming symptom of an approach to that moral degradation to which several Christian nations have long since arrived. It is gaining ground in our cities: it is rapidly pervading the country: and as it advances, it prostrates in the dust all just sentiments of virtue and religion. It effectually shuts the door against the light and influence of truth, by leaving the people to roam at large, regardless of church or Bible. It prepares the way for every species of licentious indulgence and criminal excess, by removing all moral and religious restraints. Let the friends of human happiness and of good government, beware how they trifle with sacred institutions. Whatever they may choose to think of religion, or of religion's advocates: let them not, for their own sake, for the sake of their country, and of posterity, disregard the Sabbath.

Let facts speak for themselves. What is the actual state and character of society where the Sabbath, and consequently, where all religious institutions are contemned? Do you there find the amiable virtues which contribute so essentially to the comfort and enjoyment of this life, generally prevalent? Do you there behold sobriety, temperance, industry, integrity, an honest enlightened zeal for the public welfare, with kindness and urbanity in social intercourse, in their highest perfection? No: you meet the reverse of all this. What then would be the case were the Sabbath set aside by a whole nation? The answer is obvious. For the experiment has been

made, and is perfectly familiar to you all. A whole nation has publicly and by law dishonoured the Sabbath: denied its claims to respect: and trampled upon its ordinances. And how awfully libertine in principle and in practice did that nation speedily become! It was, for a time, emphatically and justly styled a nation of atheists. And it is probably at this day, notwithstanding its political changes and revolutions, further removed from the pure light and influence of the gospel than any other Christian people on the globe. Now what share of these evils may be attributed to their profanation of the Sabbath, will appear from considering, that the crafty conspirators against Christianity, most assiduously sought, not merely to render the Sabbath null and void of obligation upon the people, but to make it actually subservient to the dissemination of their own destructive tenets. And so soon as they had secured the Sabbath, they found their work was done. The instruction of the people came into their own hands, and they speedily trained them up to their mind.

It is worthy of remark, and ought to be borne in mind, that, in all Christian countries, whether really or nominally such, those who reject the religion of the Bible, or that, whatever it be, which is called Christianity, do never substitute any other system of religion in its stead. Now, since any religion is better than none at all, it is not strange that such men become incomparably worse than pagans, or the followers of any superstition whatever.—When I say worse, I mean worse in a civil and political sense. Worse members of society, more disorderly and

unmanageable subjects of the state. It is the policy of every wise government to guard against such men: because, from such, it has everything to fear.*

The due observance and sanctification of the Sabbath is so intimately connected with the best interests of society, that, apart from its divine institution, it deserves to be urged and enforced by every consideration of human policy and interest. It answers a good worldly purpose,—to say no more. It is just the thing that every human government needs and must have, in order to its existence and support. And no regularly organized and efficient government has ever existed long without it, or without some kind of substitute for it. The nations of pagan antiquity had their holy-days and religious institutions to impress on the minds of the people a suitable reverence for their deities, and a wholesome dread

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* "It has been often said, the Sabbath is the palladium of our religion: and that as this day is observed or neglected, Christianity will stand or fall. If this be really the case, there is reason to fear it will not be of long continuance amongst us. One thing, in my judgment, is certain. If it does fall, it will fall like a strong man. It will pull down the pillars of government, and bury our country in the ruins. Every wicked man is an enemy to his country, because he breaks her laws, and spreads the contagion of vice around him: and because his conduct has a direct tendency to bring down the vengeance of heaven on his devoted country. It is high time for the friends of virtue and order amongst us, disregarding the sneers of the ignorant, or unprincipled profligate, of whatever rank or character, to stand up in defence of our country against the torrent of licentiousness that threatens to sweep away religion, law, and government."—*Rush's Charges.*

Such were the sentiments of an enlightened, pious, and patriotic civil magistrate, delivered in a solemn charge to a jury of his country. Would to God, they could be heard and faithfully regarded by every ruler and citizen in our land!

of their power and displeasure. Such too, have the pagan and Mohammedan nations of modern times. And could the enemies of revelation succeed in abolishing the Sabbath in Christian countries, they would soon be compelled, in self-defence and for self-preservation, to resort to a similar expedient: if indeed they should be so fortunate as to ride out the storm, and to survive the anarchy and the convulsions, which the mad experiment would occasion.

Were the Sabbath a mere human institution, and acknowledged to be so: I doubt not, it would be applauded by the veriest infidel (who is not an avowed enemy to every species of human comfort,) as a most wise, salutary, and happy contrivance. But vain man would fain be wise above his Maker. And because God, in his infinite goodness, has seen fit to make the provision; he pronounces it unnecessary; rejects its claims; and ridicules its sanctions.

It is however a remarkable fact, to which possibly some of my hearers may not have adverted, that there is not in the whole book of God, a single precept or institution which has the smallest tendency, in any way or in any degree, to diminish human enjoyment. Nay, there is not one which does not tend directly and most certainly to promote it in this world, even without any reference to a future. Can as much be said of the maxims and systems of its opponents: or of the greatest philosophers and sages that ever lived? I fearlessly challenge the inquiry. Where is the code of morals calculated to restrain, to regulate, to purify the vicious propensities

of the heart: and to render man the friend of man? Where shall we find the preventive to crime, and the remedy of wo? Tell me *where*,—and I will renounce the Bible! Direct me to that peaceful spot where men live happily and virtuously together.—Point me to the individual whose bosom is the seat of contentment and benevolence.—Will you not lead me straight to the land of Bibles and Sabbaths; and to the man whose soul reveres and loves them; and can you in all the world, or in any age, produce a solitary exception? Even Socrates, the wisest of the heathens, sinks low in the comparison with the humblest disciple of the despised and crucified Jesus.

* It becomes you especially, my young friends, while in a course of preparation for a more than ordinary usefulness and influence in public life, to examine this subject deeply and impartially. I present it to you this day as a matter of infinite moment to the well-being of the community. Before you decide that it is not so; give it a fair canvassing. Bring it to the test of rigid scrutiny. Look at it as men—as citizens—as patriots—as scholars—would, that I might add, as Christians! Weigh well its claims to your notice and to your support, before you yield to the sneers, and scoffs, and wit, and ridicule of the licentious and profane. Act a rational and an independent part in regard to this, as in regard to all other subjects. And if, in your consciences, after a

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* It may not be improper to apprize the reader that this Discourse was delivered in the College chapel, and that several portions of it were addressed directly to the students.

sober investigation, you are constrained to admit that the Sabbath is essential to the prevention of crime and misery: that it is essential to the *human*, no less than to the *divine* economy: then have the courage and the honesty to act agreeably to your convictions: and to become its friends and advocates.

Were it consistent with the ordinary limits of a sermon, I might accumulate argument upon argument. I might by a logical induction of particulars: by presenting you with a historical sketch of the character and condition of the nations which *have been*, and of those which *now are:* demonstrate the excellence and importance of this heavenly and benevolent institution. But I leave you to prosecute the inquiry at your leisure.

I submit a single question only,—which you can easily answer from your own observation. Is not the avowed, habitual, shameless Sabbath-breaker always a wicked, dangerous character; meet him where you will? Is he ever such a man as you can cordially esteem and honour: and to whom you would willingly confide an important interest in a trying emergency? Is no evil, think you, to be apprehended from his influence and example, if not seasonably checked and counteracted? Are not his principles directly calculated to sap the foundation of order and government? Will they not, if allowed to prevail, endanger all your privileges, civil, social, and religious? Will they not destroy private honesty and public faith: sever all the amiable and endearing ties of society: shut up every avenue to happiness in this life: and gather around the grave all the horrors of dark

despair? Yes, brethren, with confidence, I answer, yes. There is no alternative. No middle or neutral ground on which to stop. Holy seasons for holy exercises, and for the acquisition of moral and religious knowledge, must, I repeat, be firmly maintained and honestly observed: or practical atheism will prevail to the utter extermination of everything good, and fair, and virtuous amongst us. Righteousness alone exalteth a nation, while sin is the reproach, and will eventually prove the ruin of any people.

It is time for the servant of God, and the friend of man, to awake from their slumbers, and to be actively engaged in opposing that torrent of iniquity which is spreading ruin far and wide in our highly favoured land, and throughout our guilty suffering world. We are called upon by every sentiment of duty and benevolence to defend, at any hazard, this sacred institution: and to contend earnestly for that holy religion which our fathers honoured; and which the goodness of God has hitherto continued with us. It is true,—He is able to preserve it pure and flourishing without our aid. He can overrule the measures of his enemies to his own glory. He can cause the wrath of man to praise him. He can bring light out of darkness and order out of confusion. But this fact furnishes no excuse for the sloth and lukewarmness of his people. The question is not, what can God do? But what does he command us to do?

This consideration addresses itself with peculiar force to parents, and masters, and teachers: and to all who have, or who are ever likely to have, influence in society.

It calls with a loud and threatening voice on all magistrates, who are appointed the legal guardians of the public morals and of the public weal. That it is their duty, so far as it may be in their power, to interpose, in the present instance, with all the dignity and weight of office, and with all the sanctions of authority, there can be no doubt. The law of God, and the laws enacted by the wisdom of most of our State legislatures, equally demand it. Wo to that ruler who wears the sword in vain: who is not a terror to evil-doers, and a praise to them that do well: who, by his example, connives at vice: whose unconcern, or silence, or inaction affords at least an implied approbation of the habitual infraction of the very statutes which it is a part of his official duty to enforce.

But the civil magistrate can do nothing without the concurrence and aid of his fellow-citizens. In a place where the popular voice is decidedly hostile to his interference in matters of this kind, he ceases to possess the physical power, and, of course, the responsibility, of executing the law. It would require a military chieftian, at the head of his regiment, to compel obedience in opposition to general sentiment. Let not blame therefore unduly attach to the magistrate. It falls more justly on the body of the people. The people can constrain the magistrate to adopt their measures:—not he the people. This consideration appears not often to be taken into the account by those who pronounce general unqualified censure on all civil rulers who do not prevent: or, at least, punish, every violation of the Sabbath agree-

ably to the strict letter of the law. The truth is, that Christians individually and collectively, are culpable in regard to this matter. It is their province to instruct, counsel, and exhort the ignorant and the wayward: and when milder means prove ineffectual, it is their duty to countenance and support the legal authorities in suppressing open and disorderly vice of every kind.

I am aware that this view of the Christian's duty presents real difficulties. It is a very prevalent and popular opinion, that a religious man ought to keep his religion so much to himself as not to incommode those who care nothing about it. And this opinion has its advocates among professing Christians themselves. They seem to imagine that they may remain silent and passive; and let the world take its course. Hence associations for the suppression of vice, and for the promotion of virtue, are frequently opposed, not merely by the vicious, but by the avowed friends of religion. It is very true, that much evil may be done, and has been done, by an indiscreet exercise of lawful authority, and by an indiscreet use of lawful means. But zeal, without knowledge and prudence, is as much condemned by the spirit and precept of our holy religion, as lukewarmness and indifference.

It becomes us to be thoroughly persuaded, and that on substantial grounds; in the first place, of what our duty is, in every emergency: and, in the second place, of the least exceptionable and most judicious mode of performing that duty. When these two things are fairly ascertained, after a due examination of Scripture and of

all the circumstances of the case; and after much prayer to God for light and direction: our course becomes clear, and no conquerable difficulties ought to deter us from boldly pursuing it.

If these remarks do not apply, in all their latitude, to my youthful auditors at the present moment, yet the time is approaching, when they will apply, with peculiar emphasis. They cannot therefore be unseasonable or irrelative even to them. To you, very soon, our country will look: to you the church of Christ will look: to you the cause of truth and virtue will look, for the ablest and most efficacious support. To an ingenuous and generous mind, these considerations must come home with a powerful and an irresistible appeal.

But it is not enough that they touch the finer feelings of the benevolent heart: or kindle the unhallowed fires of natural ambition or philanthrophy. They ought to fasten on the conscience of every accountable rational being. It is not merely to form the patriot and the public-spirited citizen, that the Christian religion, or any of its institutions, were *chiefly* designed. They have a higher and an infinitely more important end in view. It is the happiness of man in the eternal world: it is his deliverance from the curse of sin: it is his restoration to the favour of God: and his assimilation to the character of God,—that they seek to promote. Here opens a prospect vast and boundless: and rich and glorious as it is illimitable in extent and duration.

It is the paradise of God:—where purity, and peace, and joy, reign without mixture and without end. Here

no sigh of anguish is ever heard: no tear of sadness ever flows: no murmur of discontent ever breaks upon the breeze: no dark cloud ever obscures the horizon. All is calm, and lovely, and cheerful. No envy or strife, or malice, or jealousy, or covetousness, or ambition, ever gains admittance within its sacred precincts. Friendship, harmony, love, gratitude, contentment, animate every bosom: and hallelujahs of praise and thanksgiving to the Lamb that was slain, burst from every tongue. No discordant note ever grates upon the ear: no unhallowed desire ever rises in the breast. This is not the elysium of fiction. It is the heaven of the Bible. It is *the rest* which remaineth for the people of God. It is the home of the pilgrim, and the mansion of the blessed. But let it be remembered by all those who hope or desire to enter it, that one uninterrupted, eternal, holy *Sabbath*, enlightened by the bright beams of Immanuel's throne, shines upon the happy spirits who inhabit it. And that none but those who love the Sabbath on earth, and who delight in its holy employments, can ever be qualified for that glorious and endless Sabbath which is known, and celebrated, and loved in the heavenly world.

Go then, my friends, obey the command of God, and be happy.

EARLY PIETY RECOMMENDED.

[COLLEGE CHAPEL, PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY, MAY 27, 1821.]

EARLY PIETY RECOMMENDED.*

Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.—*Eccles.* xii. 1.

Such was the advice of Solomon to the young.—And no man ever lived better qualified to give good advice.

This extraordinary man, as you all know, was abundantly blessed with the good things of this world. He excelled his contemporaries, and probably all other men of every age, in power, in riches, in honours, in friends, in learning, in wisdom—in everything which the sage, the ambitious man, or even the libertine could desire. In the eyes of an admiring and applauding world nothing was imagined wanting to complete his felicity.

To the opinions and the counsel of a man of such pre-eminent qualifications, and of such universal experience, it is reasonable that we should pay no common deference, even though the infallible Spirit of Jehovah had not been his guide in all he wrote.

What then says this mighty king of Israel, "whom all the kings of the nations feared and honoured: and who gave his heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven?"

"I have seen (he says) all the works that are done

* Delivered in the College chapel, Princeton, N. J., May 27, 1821.

under the sun, and behold all is vanity and vexation of spirit."

And again he adds, in the close of his remarks, and probably near the end of life,—"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil." And to the young he says—"Remember now thy Creator." This solemn injunction was not given in a moment of disgust or satiety: or while groaning under the pains of disappointment. He had impartially and deliberately weighed in the balance the pleasures of the world and the holy joys of religion. He well knew, for he had learned it from bitter trial, that the gratification of carnal desires can never compensate for the loss of a peaceful conscience. Hence he earnestly seeks to enforce this truth on others. And knowing the pliancy, tenderness, and comparative innocence of the youthful heart, he fain would incline it to piety and wisdom, before it becomes hardened by too long an exposure to the seductive charms of a vicious world.

The counsel of the wise man was good—and it will remain good and seasonable, so long as any youth shall exist to be benefited by it. It cannot be too often repeated, or too importunately urged. For who so thoughtless—who so prone to forget their Creator—who so unmindful of death, and judgment, and heaven, and hell, as the young and the gay? Who so apt as they to make light of serious and important truths?

Who so disposed to neglect the concerns of the soul; and to think religion unbecoming and unnecessary?

Before I proceed any further, I take leave to remind you, my friends, that our text is not to be regarded as containing merely the advice of aged wisdom. It is the command of the living God: and you are not at liberty to slight it. May I not hope, on this account, to obtain some little share of your attention, while I attempt to illustrate a precept which has God for its author: and God as the judge of your obedience or disobedience? A precept, the violation of which, if persisted in, God will most assuredly punish both in this life and in that which is to come?

My present purpose is to endeavour—

I. To explain the duty inculcated by the text—viz., "Remember thy Creator."

II. To suggest a few considerations or motives to induce the young to perform it.

I. The duty. In order to understand the full import of the phrase, *remember thy Creator*, we must recollect that the scriptures frequently express, by a general term, all the acts and duties of religion. Sometimes a part or principle; a single grace, or a particular precept, is used, as a general term, comprehending the sum and substance of all divine practical truth. Thus, wisdom, understanding, faith, love, the fear of God, walking with God, and many others, are employed,—each of them to denote the whole economy of a religious life. In like manner, remembering our Creator in the days of our youth, implies an early and an entire dedication

of ourselves to the holy service of God. It is the same thing as becoming pious or religious. And that according to the strict, legitimate, scriptural sense of the terms. When we speak of remembering God, of serving God, of loving God, we mean something more, and something essentially different from the ideas generally attached to these and similar phrases by the world.

There is a sense in which all mankind, atheists excepted, imagine they remember their Creator. Scarcely any man will allow that he is utterly forgetful of the author of his being and of his mercies. There is something so shocking in the notion of hating God, that few can endure to believe themselves guilty of it.

There are thousands living under the full meridian light of the gospel: there are some entire sects of avowed Christians: there are many individuals of every name and denomination, who flatter themselves that they *love* God,—while yet their ideas of God are not superior to those which an enlightened heathen might entertain.

There is an easy careless reliance on God, as a good, and merciful, and indulgent Father, who views the frailties of his creatures with a forgiving eye; and who will never be severe in noticing their faults, or in punishing them for errors, which, they consider, as unavoidable in this state of trial and imperfection:—there is (I say) a reliance of this sort which is extremely common and extremely grateful to human nature.

But the Bible furnishes no foundation for any such confidence. It exhibits to us a very different view both of God and of ourselves. The God of the Bible is a

holy, an all-wise, an equitable, as well as a kind, beneficent, moral Governor of the world which he has created. He is the eternal,—the irreconcilable enemy of sin, wherever and in whomsoever it exists.

He is a God of truth: and he has declared that the whole human race lieth in sin: that all men are in a state of rebellion against his government: that all are transgressors of his law: utterly incapable of satisfying its demands by reason of their depravity, and utterly indisposed to relish its purity.

He is a just God—and he has declared that he will by no means clear the guilty. How then can we remember *Him* with the affection of dutiful children, when we behold Him clothed with terrible majesty,—a consuming fire to the wicked?

Where is that divine love and goodness of which men delight to boast; and in which they so calmly and so comfortably repose? Does reason or the light of nature, or conscience, or revelation assure us of its existence, and of our safety in building our hopes upon such a foundation? Most certainly not.

Must we then despair of the favour of God, and regard him only as an enemy? Yes, my friends, as we are by nature, "with corruption for our father, and the worm for our mother and our sister," all this is awfully true.

But there is a sense in which our God is indeed a God of love. A sense, however, peculiarly humbling to the native pride of the human heart, but unspeakably cheering to the soul once enlightened to behold it.

He is a God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.

Herein is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

This is love which passeth knowledge. And we can now love God through faith in the atonement of Christ, because he first loved us.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

It is in Christ Jesus alone that mercy and truth are met together: that righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

He is the only way to the Father. The only Mediator between the sinner and his Judge. It is Jehovah-Jesus alone whom we can contemplate with hope. A God out of Christ can never be the object of a guilty creature's trust. The true God as revealed to us in Scripture is hated by every Christless soul. He that believeth not in Jesus is condemned already. And if he continue in unbelief, his condemnation is sealed forever. If he reject Christ and his salvation, he must remain eternally under the dominion and the curse of sin.

Now sin is enmity against God,—the most perfect hatred to his law and character. It is therefore a palpable contradiction to say that such a sinner can view with complacency a holy God. This would be asserting that

he can both hate and love the Judge who condemns him, at one and the same time.

Thus you see, brethren, that without faith in Jesus Christ who taketh away the sin of the world, you cannot remember your Creator as you are commanded to do. In no other name or way can you approach him, believing that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. None but the believing penitent, who has been renewed in the temper and disposition of his mind by the Holy Ghost, can remember God, except to his eternal confusion and despair.

All the good feelings therefore:—all the tender grateful affections, which many profess to cherish and to exercise towards the kind Parent of nature, as they are wont to esteem him, are delusive and inefficacious. They have no relation to the true God, but merely to an idol of their own imaginations.

To remember God, is to know, to honour, to love, and to serve him as he really is: not as our foolish hearts might wish him to be. It is to live agreeably to the end of our creation: which is, to glorify God in our bodies and in our spirits which are his. To consecrate to him as our rightful Sovereign, and through Jesus Christ, as our tender Father, the time, the talents, and the privileges which he has conferred upon us. It is to do his blessed will, and to delight in doing it. To manifest towards him, at all times, and under all circumstances, the temper of affectionate children,—of dutiful and loyal subjects,—of obedient and faithful servants.

These cursory remarks will suffice to convey a general

idea of the nature and extent of the command contained in the text.

II. I proceed, in the second place, to suggest some reasons to enforce its osbervance. And

1. Obedience to this most reasonable command—or, what is the same thing, *true religion*, is essential to our happiness both in this life and in that which is to come. And if so, it is both our interest and our duty to embrace it. The consequence will not be denied by those who admit the premises.

A dissertation on happiness seems to imply a train of reflections of so obvious and hackneyed a character as almost to forbid the expectation of awakening attention; much less of operating conviction. Although happiness be the object of every man's most ardent desires and pursuits: yet, seldom is a writer or speaker so fortunate as to gain access to the human mind by any representations which he can make; or by any rules which he can prescribe for its attainment. There is a strange inconsistency between the theory and the practice of most men on this subject. While they admit, in their speculations, that happiness is unattainable: they struggle and labour after it as though it were a *certain good* which needs only persevering enterprise in order to ensure its possession.

Now it is certainly worth our while, as rational creatures, calmly and honestly to investigate this matter: and to ascertain how much of truth and how much of error is blended with the sentiments generally entertained; that we may, at the commencement

of our course, choose the good and refuse the evil. That we may search out the *right* way; if indeed there be a *right* way; and especially if there be but *one* way to substantial felicity.

It might have been presumed beforehand that God would not have formed creatures endowed with faculties, capacities, and desires which were never to be employed or fully gratified. Accordingly, we are told in the Bible, which is the only source of correct knowledge on this subject, that God is not a hard master: that the whole system of his government and providence is wise, and equitable, and benevolent. That he has so attempered our natures to our circumstances: so arranged the course of his providence, and the principles of human conduct: that a conformity on our part with *his will*, does always contribute directly and necessarily to the promotion of our temporal, spiritual, and eternal welfare. Obedience therefore to the *divine will* constitutes human happiness—and that in exact proportion to the nature and strictness of our obedience.

We mean not however to assert that perfect happiness is attainable by man on earth, in any situation, or under any circumstances:—Because, and only because, perfect holiness is not attainable by man on earth. At the best, his days are few and evil. He is by birth an heir to sin, and pain, and care, and disappointment. And were there no future state in which his immortal faculties might flourish, and expand, and enlarge, until every wish of his heart be gratified; we should pronounce his existence to be a matter of trivial moment

to himself or others. We might take our places among the brutes that perish: and envy them that happy insensibility which enables them to enjoy the present good, unconscious of its fleeting nature, and unconcerned for the future. But we are not formed of such gross and perishable materials. We have a spirit which cannot die. A spirit which gives dignity and value unspeakable to our being. A spirit, which, spite of all our efforts, spurns the things of earth, and refuses to be satisfied with any of its stores, however prepared or refined. A spirit whose large desires none but God can fill.

Any calculation therefore which we may make for happiness, without consulting the nature and the wants of our immortal part, must of necessity fail of success. And in proportion as we duly regard and provide for this, we may expect to partake of as much happiness as can fall to the lot of humanity and no further.

This sentiment, we believe, is common to mankind. We suppose it will not be controverted. Men agree in commending *virtue* as essential to present peace and to future felicity. They agree in denouncing *vice* as the ruin of both soul and body. This opinion, thus generally expressed, is deeply rooted in our nature. It has prevailed in all ages throughout the habitable globe. A notoriously vicious man never is and never can be respected or beloved. He may be feared:—but more frequently is viewed with an eye of pity, or contempt, or disgust. He is regarded as the enemy of his own welfare; and as a curse to society. Thus far the opinion

of the world is correct. Thus far it *seems* to coincide with the nature and the precepts of revelation. But this coincidence is rather specious than real. The spirit of the world, and the spirit of our holy religion, are, in fact, opposed to each other, notwithstanding this imposing resemblance. The world applaud *virtue:* and understand by it the sum of moral excellence: but it is according to their ideas of excellence: and their ideas fall far below the gospel standard of excellence. The doctrines of the cross are too pure, too humbling to human pride, to meet with a general and cordial acceptance.

But still men feel how awful goodness is; and they will not relinquish the name, however little of the substance they retain. They talk of virtue and religion in terms of unqualified approbation. They pay the highest compliment to truth, while they are content to take refuge in its shadow. As they have borrowed a heathen term, so are they satisfied with about as much morality as entered into the heathen systems, without retaining a particle of their devotion. And this is dignified with the name of *virtue.* A word of ambiguous import, and of various application. Its dominion has long been acknowledged, and its lofty claims are scarcely questioned, even where the pure light of heaven shines with the brightest lustre. Virtue, like *honour*, which is in fact but another abused name for the same thing, may be considered as the mainspring of action among the higher classes of society. It excites to industry and enterprise: it leads to fame and grandeur. It has given

rise to so many splendid, dazzling, and apparently noble, generous deeds, as to have gained in the estimation of the world, an ascendency over the religion of Christ. It is that which the young especially are prone to substitute in its place. They fain would persuade themselves that this is quite sufficient to yield them light and comfort;—to make them great and happy.

Now, however grossly they may err as to the means, yet it is evident that they and all the world, as we before observed, do esteem religion, or virtue, or something like it, absolutely necessary both to the respectability of character and to the happiness of individuals.

But amiable and alluring as is the exterior which virtue wears, yet it would be easy to show, that all her lustre and all her excellence are borrowed from the religion of the Bible. To this rich fountain may be traced whatever is truly valuable in all the boasted systems of morals and philosophy which have been palmed upon the world as the productions of unbiased reason, guided only by the pure light of nature. As if there were any light in nature independently of the great Father of lights and the God of nature: and of that revelation which he has made of himself to a world lying in darkness and in sin!

No, brethren, they have mistaken the faint glimmerings of heavenly truth, which, in a greater or less degree, find access to the understanding of the most hardened infidel, for the dictates of natural conscience, and the discoveries of natural reason. And hence they have presumed to decry revelation as unnecessary.

If any argument then can be urged in favour of the best human systems of virtue and morals ever yet devised, it may be shown to possess infinitely more weight in behalf of the gospel. For the gospel includes whatever is excellent in them: it excludes all their imperfections: and it contains, in addition, excellences to which they do not pretend. It removes the difficulties, which in them are altogether insurmountable.

It discovers to us sources of consolation, and principles of conduct to which they are strangers. It touches those finer cords of the soul: it penetrates those deep recesses of the heart, which they have no power of reaching. It tells us how we may remember our Creator from whom we have strayed: how we may obtain his favour which we have forfeited: how we may live in peace and die in hope.—How we may overcome the world, resist its attractions, and yet fulfil all our duties in it to the glory of God and the salvation of our own souls.

It raises us above those delusive dreams of earthly enjoyment which virtue is feigned to yield; but which she never does yield even to her fondest votaries. For when we have done our utmost to excel in virtue, we find, either, that we have totally mistaken her, or that she has wantonly deceived us. We nowhere meet the rewards which are promised to virtue.

Do not misunderstand me, brethren. I am not speaking of pure and undefiled religion as taught by Christ: but of that virtue which the world has substituted in its stead. Which is inculcated by many teachers and

parents: by some moralists and divines: and by the whole mass of those writers whose talents are devoted to the amusement of their readers. Such virtue as actuates the heroes of the drama and romance: whom, from our earliest infancy, we are accustomed to admire, and to propose to ourselves as examples for imitation. Such virtue as neither weans men from the world: nor curbs the passions: nor represses inordinate ambition: nor deters from the field of duelling: nor from the haunts of unhallowed mirth and pleasure.

Such virtue as prompts men to hazard soul and body for wealth, and honour, and power, and splendour: while it draws a thick veil over the glories and the terrors of eternity. Such virtue as imparts to man an ideal consequence which leads him to imagine his destiny in his own hands. Which supersedes and slights the blessed gospel, and laughs to scorn its faithful ministers.

We have no desire to detract from its real worth. We acknowledge that many advantages of a civil, political, and social nature, do result from its influence on the lives of men. We are willing to give full credit to the principles of virtue and honour as stimulating many a naturally generous spirit to the performance of useful and praisworthy actions. But these principles are much more frequently perverted to the injury, than improved to the benefit of mankind. Their operation is naturally selfish. They impel men to make any sacrifice for their own emolument. But they do not regulate the movements and affections of the heart. They do not direct to the law of God, as the only rule of human conduct.

Public opinion is the standard to which they point. Such principles may easily mould a man into a Frederick, a Chesterfield, a Hume, or a Godwin:—but they never have produced, and never will produce, an Eliot, a Howard, a Buchanan, a Wilberforce, a Martyn, or a Washington.

The Christian, my brethren, might almost feel proud in recurring to the page of history,—there to contemplate the manifest superiority of those who were actuated by that religion which came down from heaven, over all such as were influenced by any earthly principles however refined or approved. This cannot have escaped your notice. Where is the man whose name appears in pagan story, on whose character the mind can dwell with calm, steady, unmingled pleasure and approbation? Does Socrates, or Plato, or Tully, recur to your memory as instances of the perfection of human reason and of the efficacy of human virtue? They were indeed the brightest ornaments of the heathen world; but the Christian peasant, in knowledge, in moral worth, and in cheering hope, far transcends them all.

In the sacred volume, we behold the righteous man exhibiting a character, which neither the casuist nor the scoffer will venture to condemn. A character which involuntarily wins the regard and commands the veneration of every honest reader. Compare the good men whose story is told in the Bible with all the simplicity and impartiality of truth, with the best of the heathens whose lives are portrayed with the finest pencil of the eulogist: whose actions and whose virtues are transmitted

to us adorned with all the graces of poetry and eloquence.—Compare a Moses, or a Joshua with a Solon or a Cyrus.—Compare the Saviour,—the humble son of Mary,—the reputed son of a Gallilean carpenter, the founder of our holy religion: but here, even the ingenious and eloquent Rosseau was compelled to acknowledge, that among all the sages of the earth, none could be named with him!

Compare the apostles and primitive fathers of the church with the wisest and the best of their Jewish contemporaries.—Continue the comparison, from their day to the present, of the sincere Christian, with any other description of persons of whatever sect, or creed, or name.—Look into the world as it now appears.—See honourable ambition and honourable avarice everywhere prompting to the commission of honourable crimes: and forming characters whom the world delight to honour, on the one hand.—While, on the other, you behold the people of God listening to the still small voice of religion, animated with a benevolence which the gospel alone can inspire: steadily directing their efforts to the promotion of the best interests of their fellow-men: and, in many instances, hazarding their lives to save others from dying an everlasting death:—and let candour decide on which party rests the stamp of heavenly virtue; which are pursuing the paths of heavenly wisdom; which ought to bear away the palm in our esteem; and be regarded as models worthy of our imitation.

To facts like these we might confidently appeal: and

fearlessly challenge the ablest adversaries of the cross to enter the lists against us. They could never drive us from the stronghold which their virtues have erected: this impregnable fortress which has withstood the attacks of ages and the shocks of revolutions: which no arts or stratagems have been able to undermine or surprise: which no force has impaired: and against which, we are assured, that the gates of hell shall never prevail. The army of Christian heroes and martyrs, which has been for thousands of years, boldly marching through this wilderness of sin and darkness, will continue its glorious march, till the great Captain of Salvation shall lead them in triumph to the promised land, and give them the victory over every foe, and peaceful possession of the whole habitable earth,—and finally of the mansions of the blessed in the heavenly world, where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary be at rest forever.

"Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding: she is more precious than rubies; and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."

2. If religion be ever worthy of our attention, (and we trust its importance will not be questioned,) then it follows, that no period of life can be so suitable as youth is, to embrace it and to conform to its precepts.

At this early season, the heart is less sophisticated

and corrupted by the world: more disengaged from its cares and pursuits, and more susceptible of good impressions. Some of the worst passions which usually sway the human heart have not as yet, it may be charitably presumed, obtained firm dominion over it. There is a tender sensibility to truth and moral excellence; a lofty aspiring after that which is deemed great and good; a kindly sympathy with the sorrows and distresses of the unfortunate and suffering; which, long practice in the crooked ways of a hardening world can alone eradicate or destroy.

I mean not to pronounce a eulogy on the innocence and virtues of youth. I know that they inherit that corrupt nature and those vicious propensities which mark all the descendants of our common parent as the children of wrath and the heirs of death. But I know also that all men are not equally wicked. Those who have sinned, ten, fifteen, or twenty years, are not so likely to be hardened in iniquity as those who have persisted in a course of transgression some thirty, or forty, or fifty years. Ordinarily therefore, the shorter the period during which a person has lived in a sinful impenitent state, the greater is the prospect of his return to God and of his restoration to the divine favour.

There are, it must be granted, many awful exceptions to this general rule. I mean not to flatter you, my young friends. I have seen, and probably most of you have seen, some young persons—very young indeed,—of fifteen years old and under—so abominably wicked, that

the veriest fiend might blush at the success of his own wiles and at the sight of his own work!

That youth however is the season most favourable to the service of God and most acceptable to him, we are assured in numerous passages of Scripture: and by many instances there recorded of his special and distinguished favour to his youthful worshippers. "I love them, (saith the Lord,) that love me, and those that seek me early shall find me." This divine declaration and promise ought to be regarded as an encouragement of the most precious and animating kind. It is a pledge of success to all who seek to remember their Creator in the days of their youth.

It is the universal voice of reason, of revelation, and of experience, that youth is the time, the best time, to serve the Lord.—I had almost said, the *only* time to commence this service. Aged sinners, who scarcely entertain a hope of their own salvation, acknowledge this. And on their dying beds,—how often have they importuned their young friends to take warning from themselves: and not to delay a single moment to make up their peace with God? This awful fact of frequent recurrence, speaks a language, which, I know not how any sophistry can evade, or how any heart can resist. It is a standing,—a perpetual monitor to the young. It is a continual call from the borders of the eternal world: it is a warning from the tomb: it is a voice from heaven and from hell. It is heard in every corner of our land. Wherever the hoary head appears, there it is. For every old person, believer and unbeliever, will if candid,

tell you that if you ever mean to be pious, you have no time to lose: that youth is the precious season to commence, and vigorously to prosecute the arduous but delightful work.

Dare then, my young friends, to resist the allurements and to despise the sneers of a wicked world; and to remember your Creator, while he is willing to remember you. Rise above the solicitations, the ridicule, the wit, the abuse, the satire, and the laugh of the profane, the profligate, and the scoffing. Let not the specious arguments of reasoning skepticism, or proud infidelity, bewilder or darken your understandings; or insnare your hearts by flattering your natural inclinations. Resolve to be wise: and to consecrate to religion and to God the vigour of your days. So shall heaven smile on you and protect you. The *good* shall everywhere hail you as fellow-travellers to another and a better country: and the *abandoned* shall secretly applaud your conduct, while they envy you that *good part*, which they know can never be taken from you.

Thy Creator calls upon thee, O young man, to remember him and be happy. He warns thee to flee youthful lusts: to shun those destructive pleasures which are so fascinating at thy time of life. He invites thee to prepare for heaven before thou art wholly absorbed by the things of earth: before thou art fairly engaged in that round of dissipation, to which folly and fashion will speedily seduce thee: before thou art involved in those perplexing cares and ambitious pursuits which few, very few, ever willingly abandon. He is addressing thee in

strains of the most tender and earnest entreaty. "My son," he says, "give me thy heart." "Turn quickly from the evil of thy ways.—Why wilt thou die? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God; wherefore, turn and live." And dost thou say to God, "depart from me, for I desire not the knowledge of thy ways?" Does God demand of thee the morning of life,—and art thou prepared deliberately to say to him: not yet, Lord?—but, by-and-by, when the decrepitude of age shall remind me of the grave: when my eye shall become dim,—my ear heavy,—my limbs incapable of doing their office,—when I can no longer mingle in the song and in the dance,—when I shall be dead to the delights of life, and have nothing but my last great change in view,—then verily I will remember thee! Then will I repent, and humbly crave the forgiveness of those sins which I am still resolved to commit! Leave me therefore for the present.—Suffer me to eat, and drink, and be merry with my companions.—When I have a more convenient season I will call for thee, and strive to engage in thy gloomy service!

Such would be the language of thousands were they to utter the real sentiments of their hearts. A language at once absurd, contumacious, insulting, and insincere.

But let it be granted that you really mean to become religious before you die.—And I verily believe there is not living the man who does not calculate on making some sort of provision for a future state; at some indefinitely distant period.

Is not this your calculation? Allow me then to ask,

where is your security, in the mean time, for years to come? Why do you presume to say to-morrow—next year—at such or such a stage of life—after accomplishing this or that design—after indulging in ease and pleasure a little longer? Have you made a covenant with death that he shall not smite you,—an agreement with hell that it shall not swallow you up? How do you know that you will ever see another year or another day? And is heaven to be hazarded on this uncertainty—this peradventure—this miserable chance—this deceitful and deceiving *if?* Does not the voice of reason unite with the voice of Scripture in saying—"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might: for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest"? "Behold *now* (and now only) is the accepted time: behold now is the day of salvation."

I am aware that religion wears an aspect forbidding and repulsive to the young. But it is frequently because its genuine character is mistaken. It possesses nothing of that unamiable, cold, morose, illiberal, or unsocial spirit with which its enemies have so lavishly charged it. Rest assured then that it will not degrade you, nor deprive you of any real good. The religion of Jesus Christ never degraded any man. But man, by his inventions, and by his inconsistent life, has often disgraced religion and tarnished its beauty and its purity in the eyes of those who judge of its excellence from the character of its professors. No, my hearers, you have

nothing to *lose*, but everything to *gain*, by the choice which we urge you this day to make.

Under the mild heavenly influence of our holy religion, you shall taste and see that the Lord is good. Every unhallowed desire shall be subdued:—your affections purified, and fixed on worthy objects. The sting of forbidden joys shall no more pierce your hearts. No more shall be implanted that seed of bitterness which has heretofore so often sprung up and marred your fairest prospects of felicity. You shall range with renewed vigour and with daily increasing delight in the green pastures of everlasting love. You shall be enabled to pass fearless through the varying scenes of life, and fearless through the dark valley of death. In this world you shall enjoy a contented mind and a peaceful conscience. In the world to come, joy unspeakable and full of glory.

3. Permit me, in the third place, to address an argument to your own sense of duty and obligation to those who sustain towards you the tenderest relation in life.

"A wise [or religious] son, saith Solomon, maketh a glad father: but a foolish [or wicked] son is the heaviness of his mother." And again, "A foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her that bare him."

An affectionate parent certainly knows no greater earthly gratification than that which arises from a view of the correct and dutiful deportment of his children. And dead to every ingenuous feeling must be the heart of that child which does not respond to the anxious wishes of a kind indulgent parent. The curse of Al-

mighty God rests upon the head of the froward disobedient child, while his richest blessings are promised to him that honoureth father and mother.

It is true that in this age of licentious innovation, the sacred obligations imposed on youth, to love, revere, and obey those whom God has placed over them, and bound to them by the most endearing ties, are but feebly acknowledged. Parental authority and parental claims are too much slighted. As if it were unmanly to respect, or even to heed a father's counsel, or to sympathize with a mother's tears. As if it betrayed a want of spirit to submit to the wholesome restraints of superior age and wisdom. But verily the Lord hath not so judged. And what his word condemns, is also condemned by the reason, the conscience, and the common feelings of mankind. None can view with complacency a stubborn, ungrateful, rebellious son. Such conduct is regarded not merely as contrary to the divine will: but as a direct violation of every principle of propriety, of decency, and of duty. As arguing uncommon depravity and hardness of heart; as manifesting a total destitution of all the amiable affections, and of all the generous sentiments, which are prized as being natural to humanity, and the want of which never fails to sink the man into the monster.

Now, my young friends, many of you are doubtless blessed with pious parents: whose daily prayer to God is, that you may become heirs of the covenant of promise: that you may stand forth in society the friends and advocates of religion: the pillars of the

church and of the state: the hopeful candidates for a crown of unfading glory. And are you preparing to disappoint their hopes, and to pierce their hearts through with many sorrows, by counteracting and thwarting all their kind purposes and wishes?

Have they provided for you an abundant store of this world's goods? Then what do they expect of you, but that their bounty be not expended to your undoing: and to their own shame and confusion? How would they exult at beholding you deaf to the seductive voice of sinful pleasure, and nobly devoting your time, your talents, your learning and your wealth, to the promotion of the best interests of yourselves and others? It would be as balm to their anxious bosoms to see you, in their evening of life, become fathers to the fatherless,—the widow's support,—a comfort to the poor, the sorrowful and the wretched. To hear the orphan and the friendless outcast imploring heaven's choicest blessings on your heads, for that seasonable charity which supplied their wants and dried the tear of anguish. This would yield a joy which none but the pious parent can feel,—which none but the virtuous child can impart.

Remember your Creator then, ye sons and daughters of affluence, that your parents may rejoice over you while they live: and in their dying hour, be enabled to take the last farewell without one pang from a retrospect of your past conduct, and without any fearful apprehension for the future.

Remember your Creator, ye children of poverty and affliction, that ye bring not down the gray hairs of a

loving father or mother with sorrow to the grave. Give them the joy of knowing that you have laid up a treasure in heaven, which shall remain a sure inheritance, though you should be denied access to this world's riches. Let them, in their last moments, triumph in the prospect of leaving their beloved offspring in the hands of that Almighty Being who gave them life, and who will never forsake any that put their trust in him!

4. Lastly, The counsel of the wise man will appear peculiarly seasonable and excellent, when we recollect that it is addressed to those who are just entering upon the theatre of active life.

You will soon be called to the performance of numerous and important duties. It becomes you now most seriously to reflect:—To consider the great end for which you came into the world, and how you may best serve God and your generation. Yours has ever been esteemed the most critical period of life. It is the hinging point on which turns the character of your future years, and the destiny of your immortal souls.

Almost every truly great man has laid the foundation of his greatness in youth: and has shaped his course accordingly. If this golden season be neglected, a vicious, a barren, a contemptible old age will almost inevitably be the consequence.

Your fathers will soon have done with all terrestrial concerns, and you must occupy their places in the various walks of public and of private life. The statesman, the patriot, the veteran soldier, religion's advocate, the humble worshipper of God, the faith-

ful disciple of Jesus, are fast hastening to the house appointed for all living. The stations which they have long and ably filled must soon be filled by you. Does this consideration awaken no emotions, or excite no interest? Do you feel no desire to honour their memory by endeavouring to walk in their steps?

The noblest trait in the character of Josiah king of Judah, which the Spirit of the Highest has thought proper to record, is, that, "while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father."

Do not imagine, my friends, that religion will disqualify you for the duties of public and honourable life. The history of the Jewish, and of all Christian nations, will abundantly refute any such erroneous opinion. Have not pious kings, and nobles, and magistrates, and generals, in every age, been most beloved, admired, and blessed in their undertakings? Have not their virtues, in fact, done more towards immortalizing their names, and embalming their memory in the hearts of posterity, than all the splendour of their thrones, their honours, or their achievements?

The gospel has been slandered by those who affirm that its tenets are unfavourable to patriotism and the love of country. It well becomes all such objectors and cavillers to be silent;—until they can make it appear, at least, plausible, that the friend of God and man is less likely to prove a good citizen and a faithful servant to his country, than the man who slights the Author of his being and of his mercies.

Let them show that he who feels no gratitude to God;

no respect for his laws; no pleasure in his service; is more likely to be grateful to his country, obedient to her laws, and zealous in her service; than the Christian who has learned to "render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to all men their just dues: tribute to whom tribute is due: custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour." Who has learned, as a part of his religion, to be subject unto the higher powers; to do unto all men, as he would have them do unto him; and who trembleth at the thought of committing any iniquity.

Facts everywhere contradict the malicious calumnies which are uttered against the gospel by its unblushing and hardy opponents, who catch at every semblance of a reason for bringing it into disrepute as a system unfriendly to the great interests of communities, and as destructive of all political bonds and associations. Universal experience proves, beyond controversy, the soundness and practical wisdom of the grand scriptural maxim: that righteousness alone exalteth a nation, while sin is the reproach and will eventually prove the ruin of any people. And deplorable is the condition of that nation in which no righteous Lots; no interceding Abrahams, can be found to stay the hand of the destroying angel when he passes over. A dreadful *wo* is pronounced against every such nation. An awful curse rests upon it. And a destiny, big with horror, awaits it.

Let men say what they will, yet if there be any truth in God's Word,—and if anything can be learned from

the experience of ages,—then is it evident, that the friend of God, is the only true, substantial, availing friend of his country. The humblest Christian, who daily offers up his sincere prayers in her behalf, does more than he, who not having the fear of God before his eyes, directs her councils, or levies armies in her defence.

Remember your Creator then, that he may remember in mercy the land in which you dwell: and that you may become as shining lights in the midst of it. You can never expect, on solid ground, to prosper in any enterprise or pursuit, which is not begun, continued, and ended with God.

Presume not to boast of your zeal for the public good, while you ungratefully neglect the Fountain of all good; the great King of kings, and Lord of lords, on whom depend the existence, prosperity, and happiness of nations: and who holdeth in abhorrence all the habitual transgressors of his law, and the despisers of his grace.

The command of the Saviour is,—"Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness: and all these things [that is, all needed temporal things] shall be added unto you."

Do you wish to be respected, useful, and happy in any profession or calling in life—whether public or private—in the church or in the state?—Lay broad and deep the foundation now. Let religion be the corner-stone on which the whole edifice shall rest. Aspire, with a noble daring, to the loftiest eminence. But let religion guide

you in every stage of your progress, and consecrate to God the object at which you aim. This is the only kind of ambition which will conduct you to true greatness; and preserve you from those cruel disappointments which drive to despair so many of the unsuccessful candidates for worldly honours and distinctions.

TO THE STUDENTS OF NASSAU-HALL.

When I survey the little company which usually assemble in this hall for worship: collected as they are from almost every section of this extensive Republic: it is impossible for me not to follow them in imagination into the busy world; and to trace with prophetic ken the various parts which they seem likely to act on the great stage of public life.

One, on whom rests the meek, gentle, dove-like spirit of heavenly wisdom, bids fair to become an eminent herald of the cross—a joyful messenger of peace to a distracted world—a patient, laborious, faithful minister of reconciliation to the guilty and the perishing.

Another promises to adorn religion in the more retired walks of private life: there, by his holy example; by his active, unobtrusive benevolence; to shed a lustre on the Christian name: and to inspire peace and joy into many an aching bosom, while he kindly fosters every institution, and patronizes every plan which is calculated to meliorate the condition of suffering humanity, and to promote the glory of his Master's name.

Many are looking forward to the bar, to the healing

art, or to merchandise, as their future field of enterprise and emolument: but with what views and motives they will commence and prosecute their several schemes and labours, the Searcher of hearts alone can know. Fraternal affection bids them all, God speed: but with a fearful anxiety, lest some of them, at least, should venture to go forth without the divine blessing and protection.

One—and another seems likely to take a distinguished part in the government of his country:—perhaps to become the senator, or judge, or chief magistrate of the nation: with what trembling solicitude does the tenderness of friendship watch his footsteps; and mark his progress towards the goal of his wishes! Will he rule in the fear of God,—will he prove a blessing or a curse,—a benefactor or a scourge to the people who shall honour him with their confidence?

But I behold another,—perhaps a young man of native genius and high promise: on whom parental fondness doats: whose departure from sacred home was the occasion of many a fervent prayer to heaven for his welfare: who received a kind father's parting benediction, and a weeping mother's sad farewell embrace, with a heart melted to tenderness, and resolved to gratify their every wish. I behold him now, after an absence of a few months or years, associating with the licentious and the profane: neglecting study for the haunts of vice and folly: sacrificing his precious time and the principles of virtue with which parental piety had imbued his tender mind; at the shrine of forbidden pleasure; at the festive board of intemperance; at the infernal table of

the gambler; and subsiding by degrees into a state of habitual sensuality and confirmed skepticism! Is this a spectacle which any man, whose heart is not made of adamant, can contemplate with indifference?

A young man, the pride and the hope of his family, standing, as it were, on the threshold of life, and just going to enter upon the world's wide theatre: with libertine principles and habits: with a hardiness in vice which has steeled the mind and seared the conscience against every good impression: into how deep a gulf of perdition is he sinking! With what awful forebodings do I follow him in that downward career which he seems determined to pursue! Of how much misery and crime may he not yet become the author: how much moral devastation may he spread around him in society? What ruinous and abominable principles may he one day disseminate? How many innocent persons [comparatively innocent] may his seductive example and insinuating manners lead astray from the high road of virtue and peace: till they become as hardened as himself: and with him sit down in the seat of the scornful: there with united efforts and augmented wiles strive to extend their dominion over others still; and to spread wide the tempting and decoying net to catch and to hold fast the unwary and unstable wherever they can find them?

Will he become the apostle of infidelity: the bold active enemy of revelation;—a Voltaire or a Paine? Or will he be the subtle, systematic, refined, philosophizing freethinker,—a Hobbes, a Tindal, a Bolingbroke, or

a Hume? Or be content in a lower sphere to indulge in all the variety of sensuality and riot;—to be what Rochester and Gardiner were before the grace of the Highest had awakened them from the delirium of profligacy into which they were sunk: and reclaimed them when on the verge of perdition,—to live, at once, a warning to the rake, and an encouragement to the returning prodigal?

Can he be destined for any great offices in public life? Yes; it is possible. For the world has seen the infidel, the scoffer, and the libertine raised to posts of honour, and hailed with the loudest acclamations of an infatuated multitude.

But whatever may be his lot in life, however exalted, or however humble,—he must have influence of some kind. The veriest vagabond on earth is scarcely so degraded as to be unable to find a companion who may not be made worse by his example and by his influence. He will have relatives, and friends, and associates,—and among these he may appear respectable. He may form connexions, and become the head and the guide of a family:—of a family which will look to him with affection and confidence for counsel and direction. Merciful God, what a prospect is here!

Where, in the universe, is the benevolent being who would not be constrained to say—better were it for this young man,—better for his friends,—better for society,—better for future generations,—that the work of death were already begun within him;—that the strength and the bloom of his youth were fading fast away, and that

he were hastening to an early tomb, mourned by those that love him, and pitied by those who *know* but cannot *love* him! Yea, better were it for him that he had never been *born*, than thus to live, a curse to all within the sphere of his contaminating principles and example!

Is there a youth in this assembly to whom these remarks will, in any respect, or in any degree, apply? I hope, in the spirit of charity, that there is not one. But if there be; suffer me with affectionate importunity to beseech you, as you value the dearest interests of humanity, and the noblest end of your own existence: as you regard your present welfare and reputation: and more especially as you dread the awful doom of the hardened sinner, and feel any concern for the future happiness of your immortal spirit;—to consider well the tendency, and the fatal issue, of the dark path into which you have begun to wander.

"Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, [with the sigh of anguish and despair,] I have no pleasure in them."

ON TRUE WISDOM

FOR TIME AND ETERNITY.

[NEWTOWN, LONG ISLAND, 1811.]

ON TRUE WISDOM.*

"So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."—*Psalm* xc. 12.

PART I.

The Psalm, from which these words are taken, is supposed to have been a prayer offered up by "Moses, the man of God," in a season of peculiar trial and distress. The spies whom he had commissioned to explore the land of Canaan, on their return, represented the natives as exceedingly strong and formidable—as giants, with whom it would be rash and vain to contend. The Israelites were disheartened by the report; and, as usual, murmured against Moses, and denounced him as the author of all their calamities. Instead of confiding in Jehovah, the God of hosts, who had so often made bare his arm for their deliverance, they cry out in seditious threatening language: "Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness!" The Almighty, notwithstanding the earnest entreaty of the prophet, determines to punish them, yet not with that immediate and total destruction

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which their contumacy and unbelief so richly merited. For the intercession of Moses was not entirely disregarded. "And the Lord said, I have pardoned according to thy word: But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord. Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles which I did in Egypt, and in the wilderness, have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice. Surely they shall not see the land which I sware unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it." Thus it was decreed that none of them should survive the term of forty years, except Joshua and Caleb, who maintained their integrity, amidst the general tumult and rebellion. Well, therefore, might Moses pray, both for himself and his guilty people: "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."

But this petition is recorded, not merely because it suited Moses and the Israelites in their extraordinary circumstances. It is recorded because it suits the character and condition of every individual of every age and nation. It ought to be in the mouth, and to affect the heart and life, of every son and daughter of Adam. This is the prayer which true wisdom would lead us all to make: "So teach us, thou Infinite Fountain of truth and wisdom, to bear in mind the shortness and uncertainty of life, that we may, at any moment, be prepared for death, by spending all our days in the constant and faithful discharge of every duty."

In further illustrating and applying the text, we shall

endeavour to place before you two distinct views of our existence here.

I. The first, as it regards the present world only.

II. The second, as it is a state of preparation for a future and a better world.

I. In the first place then, let us inquire what wisdom would recommend to us as the happiest and most suitable course of life, even though we look not beyond the grave.

"To number our days," is a Hebrew idiom implying that they are so exceedingly few as to be easily counted. We see them rapidly hastening to a close. It is therefore our interest, no less than our duty, to improve them diligently as they pass. Three score years and ten are, in general, the longest period allotted to human life. Few, however, comparatively speaking, reach that period, or even the half of it. This fact nobody denies or disputes. By far the greater part of mankind die in infancy, in youth, in early manhood, before they arrive at the age of thirty or forty. Here and there one only is spared to fill up the measure of the years assigned to this mortal career. To realize most forcibly this truth, perhaps the best way is to ask any man, seventy years old, about the companions of his youth. Where are they? Let him look around, and bring in review all those with whom he delighted to associate in the days of health, and gaiety, and business, and ambition. "Alas," with a sigh he will exclaim, "they are gone—they have paid the debt of nature—they have left me alone in the world." Two or three, perhaps, he will

point out, still standing like himself, the trembling mementoes of generations that are already forgotten,—and their places occupied by strangers who never knew them.

But suppose for a moment, that you, my hearers, will complete the period of three score and ten. Still, in order fairly to ascertain the sum of life, we must deduct the time lost or wasted in infancy, in sleep, in sickness, in various kinds of refreshment and recreation, in idleness and unprofitable conversation, and in all those ways by which men contrive to kill or get rid of time, without enjoying or improving it. Let the calculation be made on the most liberal scale. Give to man all the virtue he is capable of possessing, and as long a life as can be expected. Grant that he misspends no time wilfully. And then tell us what is the amount of active useful life. Probably, on a candid examination, and after a reasonable allowance on the score just mentioned, it will be found that the oldest and most industrious men on earth do not live much over twenty years. At least, the man of seventy is supposed not to be actively employed more than twenty years. Surely then, life is short. And the representations of it given in Scripture have more point and pertinence than is generally perceived. There we are told that life is a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. That our days on earth are as a shadow, as an handbreadth—that they are swifter than a weaver's shuttle—that they are as grass, as a flower of the field. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone, and the place

thereof shall know it no more. "We spend our years as a tale that is told. The days of our years are three score years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be four score years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away." Considering then the present life as the only scene of action and enjoyment ever to be expected; considering that seventy years comprise the whole period which can be denominated life; and twenty years as about the whole that we can apply to all the purposes which we may be desirous or ambitious to accomplish, I mean on the supposition that we attain to a good old age; and considering also the fact that so few ever become old: does not wisdom dictate to us, as both natural and reasonable, that we should use all practicable means to prolong an existence which must, at furthest, terminate so very soon? For to those who have placed their affections exclusively on this world, death can proffer nothing but misery or annihilation: and neither of these, we suppose, can afford much consolation in prospect.

Men, who limit their views to this world, ought, in all conscience, to desire to live, and to strive to live, as long as possible. "A short life and a merry one," I know is the motto of some. But all such are regarded as fools by the wise men of this world, as well as by the candidates for a better. "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die"—may be said and sung by the sensualist in his cups, with great spirit and glee among his sottish companions: but this brutish sentiment has never yet obtained currency with the mass even of this world's

votaries. It has long since been discovered, that, in order to make the best of the world; in order to enjoy the most of its pleasures and riches and honours, a long life of health and vigour and prosperity, is very important; and, in general, quite essential. The poor hapless rake, whose career is cut short at the age of twenty or thirty, is commonly pitied or ridiculed even by those who indulge in the same vices, but who contrive to keep within safer limits. While he is denounced and condemned by all who aim at, what they conceive to be, nobler objects. A vicious young man (I use the term *vicious* in its worldly and worst acceptation,) finds no quarter anywhere, except among his youthful and vicious associates. And even they often contemplate, with a kind of malicious compassion, one and another of their number, whose emaciated form and haggard countenance testify that he is not long for this world. They daily behold him wasting away, but they hurry him along, and urge him into new and greater excesses; until they literally kill him in the midst of pleasures which he has long felt to be his curse and his ruin. Such a course can have no serious advocates. It is as contemptible as it is horrible.

It is presumed, my hearers, that you all wish to live to a good old age. Nay, it is probable that you would gladly escape death altogether. Now, from this love of life which is so natural to all men, and which is peculiarly strong in the carnally minded, we would suggest the propriety of a regular temperate mode of living, as

the surest means of prolonging your days to the utmost extent which mortals can attain.

It is very well known that every species of inordinate and licentious indulgence has a powerful and direct tendency to shorten life. The vices of intemperance daily send thousands of wretched victims to a premature grave. I need not attempt to unfold to you the structure of the body, and the manner in which the excessive gratification of any appetite or passion operates upon it and hastens its dissolution. It is not so much the mode, as the results, with which we are now concerned. We see the effect, and we know the cause: and this is enough for our present purpose. Diseases often originate in vice. And it is a very trite remark, that, a libertine youth sows the seeds of death which soon vegetate and overpower the debilitated constitution. Now a man who will thus barter a life of health and calm enjoyment, for a momentary excess, which is often painful even when indulged, does not surely act on wise principles. He does not consult his own welfare, in any respect or degree; but madly sacrifices the only possibility of happiness within his reach to blind headstrong passion. The brevity of life forbids his offering any apology in extenuation of his follies. And we cannot reconcile his self-destroying conduct with his dread of death or his love of life. He often plunges into the gulf with open eyes. He knowingly, and yet against his wishes, curtails the span of his existence. He rushes into the arms of death; and yet the thought of really dying fills him with unspeak-

able horror in the moment of cool reflection. But rather than desist, he ventures the irreparable loss both of his capacity and his opportunity of enjoyment. He virtually courts the shroud and the grave, while there is nothing he would more gladly avoid. He seems to say to the ghastly messenger, "Come on, but present the poisoned cup with so many intoxicating sweets infused, that I shall not perceive its object or be conscious of its effects."

The single vice of drunkenness destroys more men in our country than sword or famine or pestilence, or than all combined. Savages are extremely prone to this vice. Barbarous and grossly ignorant people are everywhere prone to it. I was going to call it, by way of eminence, the peculiar and distinguishing vice of barbarians and savages—as well as of the baser part of most civilized communities. Certain it is, that our Indians and our slaves delight in the free and excessive use of inebriating liquors; and they seldom miss an opportunity of indulging their propensity. The poor and the ignorant easily give themselves up to it; and it serves to extend and to perpetuate poverty, ignorance and wretchedness wherever it prevails. But this vice, odious and debasing and ruinous and beastly as it is, is not confined exclusively to that portion of mankind who approach the brute in intellect and condition. There are those who prefer claims to refinement—to superior mental powers and mental furniture—who indulge in this vice. Some men of science and literature, and of honourable standing in society, occasionally; and a few, habitually, degrade

themselves in this way to a level with the veriest refuse and dregs of human society.

Nay, we have heard that there are some colleges and universities in the world—some even in our own highly favoured land—where gallant young men, high-minded, honourable young men, instead of adorning and enriching their minds with the precious stores of science and literature, give themselves almost wholly to sensual pleasure—get drunk every day—and indulge in all the variety of dissipation. Now such youths assuredly will not be thought by any competent judges, Christian or heathen, to be acting a very wise or profitable part. Their parents send them to college to acquire useful knowledge, that they may be qualified for all the honourable stations and distinctions which this world has to bestow. And they disregard parental authority, and blast parental hopes and wishes; and return home, after years of folly and expense, the bloated wrecks and monuments of disease and vice and shame—to meet the embraces of a sister, and a mother, and a father, who had been fondly anticipating the joy of beholding in a brother and a son all that is manly, and polished, and intelligent, and noble, and generous, and lovely. Ah, what mortification, what cruel disappointment, what tears of anguish, what ineffable misery do I witness in such a meeting! A youth who, a few years before, had departed from sacred home, followed by the blessings and the prayers of a beloved family—the hope and the pride of his relatives and friends—returning to them again from the fountain of science, a degraded, senseless, brut-

ish, dying sot! Where is the parent who would not rather follow his only son to an untimely grave, than to receive him thus transformed into all that is disgustful, and repulsive, and pitiable in the human form and character?

Where shall we find an adequate, or even a specious apology for such madness? Why is it that the dictates and counsels of wisdom are so often contemned by youth when associated for the noblest purposes—when engaged in the most exalted and grateful pursuits—when professedly submitting to that course of discipline and culture which will prepare them to lead the way in honour's high career, and to ascend the loftiest steeps of human greatness?—To say nothing of other and nobler ends to which well-directed and sanctified learning is ever subservient. Surely, if there be anything in human prospects alluring and encouraging—anything in itself calculated to impart stability to character—anything to deter from gross and destructive vice—anything to prompt to enterprise and exertion—the privileged student of a college is the individual, above all others, who should be the farthest removed from all that is grovelling and mean and licentious. It is he, if any one on earth, whom we should expect to see asserting the dignity of his nature, and manfully contending for the noblest prize within the grasp of mortality.

But the fact is otherwise. Most colleges and public seminaries for the education of youth have ever been, more or less, the haunts of folly and dissipation; and, in some instances, the very sinks of iniquity and abomi-

nation. This fact, to be sure, argues not much in behalf of the native excellence and moral purity of the human character. For here we behold some scores or hundreds of innocent unsophisticated youth (innocent, I mean, in the world's opinion,) brought together from various and distant parts of the country, and directed to an exercise of their faculties and talents the best adapted to preserve them from the evil that is in the world—to keep them out of harm's way—and to raise them above every unhallowed desire and vicious indulgence. They are not seduced by hardened profligates, already hackneyed in the wiles and arts and vices of the world: for, by the supposition, there are none such among their number. On the contrary, they are usually placed under the guidance of virtue and wisdom and experience—under the wholesome control of reasonable authority—under the watchful care and restraining influence of affectionate solicitude and instructive example. But in spite of all these favourable circumstances—in spite of all these animating considerations and motives—in spite of all this painful vigilance, and parental counsel, and kindly discipline—they speedily find out the path that leads to the house of the destroyer. They taste the intoxicating draught, at first perhaps, with trembling lips—but anon, without disgust—presently, they seek it with eagerness, and revel in all the riot of forbidden and destructive pleasure with delight.

Solomon has long since marked out their course, and painted their folly to the life. And he knew something of the matter from his own experience, and still more

from observation. Study his excellent sayings and graphic descriptions—his pointed proverbs, and prudent counsels, and pathetic appeals. He will teach you to be wise—wise for this world—to say nothing of another.

Now I do not know how many, or how few, or whether any of my present hearers are in the predicament suggested, or whether they are verging towards it. This I know, that all youth everywhere are exposed to the perils, and liable to the excesses at which we have hinted. They cannot therefore be unseasonably warned and counselled to take heed to their ways, lest they fall a prey to intemperance before they suspect their danger.

I am aware of the aversion which most men feel to religion. It is enough that anything be presented under a religious aspect to insure their disregard to it. Keep religion then, if you please, out of view. I am contemplating the world as it is. The world in itself is very good. There are many very good and very desirable things in it. The great mass of mankind seem to be very well satisfied with it. They make it their portion: and their regret usually is that they cannot get enough of it. The grand problem to be solved therefore is: How shall we number our days so as to apply our hearts unto wisdom? How shall we live so as most certainly and effectually to compass those ends, and to obtain those objects, which, in the estimation of wise worldly men, will confer the greatest happiness?

Riches, honours, power, knowledge, pleasure, fame—these are the principal things which men covet, and struggle to acquire and to enjoy. But in order to attain

these, and certainly to enjoy them when attained,—life, I repeat, long life is indispensable.

Now all the writers and speculators on the subject of longevity (at least, since the philosopher's stone and the panacea of the alchymists have been despaired of,) agree in recommending temperance, early rising, and due exercise of body and mind, as necessary to long life. Here then you have the first lesson which wisdom inculcates. You cannot hope to live many years except you be temperate. Temperance in eating and drinking—in every pursuit—in every amusement—and in every indulgence—is indispensable. This is a truth of the very first importance. It is radical. It is grounded on the reason and nature of things. It is confirmed by the experience of ages. Every instance of a departure from strict temperance is followed by some portion of pain. And habitual intemperance becomes habitual misery, except in the paroxysms of maddening mirth and revelry, when reason and consciousness become torpid, and incapable of doing their office.

I urge this point with all possible earnestness, because it is so completely overlooked by the young, and because a failure here is blasting to all their hopes. It will be death to all their golden dreams and prospects of earthly bliss. It will make few their days: and will render those few a burthen and a curse to themselves, to their friends, and to the world. I urge it with affectionate importunity, because I have seen issue from institutions consecrated to science, to virtue, and to piety, most melancholy and heart-rending examples of all the misery of

which youthful intemperance, in its various forms, is capable. Ah, my young friends, did you know the grief—the torture—which you inflict in the bosoms of those who love you most, and who would esteem no sacrifice too great to save you from the snares which beset your path; you would dash from your lips the proffered cup, and spurn with indignation from your sight the wretch who would seduce you from wisdom's ways.

I appeal to history—to biography—to the experience of ancient and modern times—to the dead and the living—to instances innumerable all around you—to the sentiments of all the sages and of all the libertines, who have ever dogmatized, and speculated, and moralized on the subject, for the truth of the position, that intemperance is the bane of health and the destruction of all that the world calls good and great.

You may admire an Alexander while pursuing a career of unrivalled splendour and glory: but you pity his folly in losing the empire of the world, at the very moment when he might have begun to enjoy it, and become the benefactor of the nations whom he had subdued. How different the character and conduct of the Persian Cyrus, as portrayed by the elegant pencil of the inimitable Xenophon? Temperance was his cardinal virtue—as it was of all his countrymen at that time. It was the temperate and hardy Macedonians who achieved the conquest of the then degenerated and effeminate Persians. But in turn, they too, with their master, fell a prey to the luxuries and the vices of the people whom they con-

quered. Such has been the usual order of events. Temperance, with its allied and kindred virtues, has ever given superiority to individuals and to nations over all others addicted to the opposite vices.

The same order obtains still: and it obtains universally. Youthful intemperance ordinarily prevents the attainment of any excellence. Had Alexander been a drunkard at twenty, it is probable he would never have enterprised the conquest of Asia. His father's kingdom would have satisfied his ambition: and his father's palace would have been the scene of all his riotous and destructive pleasures. He might have been a Nero—but of heroic exploits, he would have been as guiltless as the Roman incendiary.

But at whatever period the vice of intemperance gains the mastery of the man, it commences the work of spoliation. His laurels begin to wither from his brow—his riches take to themselves wings—his health sinks beneath its insidious approaches—his honours are scattered to the winds—his intellect is enfeebled—his learning is no longer profitable. He is contemplated with scorn by some; with compassion by others; while he is honoured and trusted by none. What does the world usually think and say of a drunken lawyer, or physician, or merchant, or planter, or statesman, or general?

Had Newton, or Locke, or Washington been a sot in early youth, we had of course never heard their names. They had perished like the brute; and the world had cared nothing about them. But suppose they had become habitually intemperate at any period of their

lives: suppose, after all their labours and achievements, they had died drunkards: how would the benevolent biographer and historian have laboured to draw the veil of charitable oblivion over the last years of human greatness and human frailty! I have made this revolting supposition that you may, at a glance, apprehend the lustre and the beauty of unblemished character; and realize how foul a blot this single vice would have impressed on their name. But Newton and Locke and Washington were temperate from the days of their youth to the day of their death. And so have been the most of those who have ever attained to honourable distinctions.

It is the sober man who becomes rich. It is he who becomes learned. It is he who acquires influence and reputation in society. It is he who succeeds in any honourable profession or calling. In a word, it is the temperate man, and only he, who enjoys even carnal pleasures of any kind to the best advantage and in the highest degree. This may appear a paradox. But the men of the world have learned wisdom by experience. While they ridicule the rigid precepts of religion, and affect to despise her restraints; they have discovered that moderation, even in sensual indulgences, is essential to real pleasure. They have ascertained that whatever is immoderate, extravagant, excessive, is injurious and painful. That it defeats the object aimed at, and brings its own punishment in its train. The wary voluptuary therefore is moderate and temperate. He shuns excess, that he may live the longer, and enjoy the more of those

pleasures which constitute his chief good. Like the soldier who runs away, that he may live to fight again: he is too wise to suffer pleasure to incapacitate him for all enjoyment or to kill him outright. He pities those who live too fast, and condemns them as fools. It is the order of nature that men be temperate in all their enjoyments, and in all their pursuits, if they would be happy. It is vain to contravene this order. It is impossible to reverse it.

We read of an Italian nobleman, who, in his youth, gave full scope to his inclinations, and tasted every cup of pleasure within his reach. He found however, when scarcely thirty years old, that he was on the verge of eternity: and this alarmed him. He bethought himself what was to be done. And finally resolved that life was preferable to rioting. He wisely embraced a uniformly temperate course of living, by which he gained at least three score years—for he survived a hundred—whereas it was morally certain, previously to his reformation, that he would never have seen forty.

"Most men (said he, for he tells his own story,) suffer themselves to be seduced by the charms of a voluptuous life. They have not courage to deny their appetites; and being over-persuaded by their inclinations so far, as to think they cannot give up the gratification of them, without abridging too much of their pleasures, they devise arguments to persuade themselves, that it is more eligible to live ten years less, than to be under any restraint. Alas! they know not the value of ten years of healthy life, in an age when a man may enjoy the full

use of his reason, and turn all his wisdom and experience to his own and the world's advantage."

"O holy, happy, and thrice blessed temperance, (he continues) how worthy art thou of our highest esteem!—and how infinitely art thou preferable to an irregular and disorderly life! Nay, would men but consider the effects and consequences of both, they would immediately see, that there is as wide a difference between them, as there is betwixt light and darkness, heaven and hell."

And at the age of ninety-five, he writes thus of himself. "All the faculties of my mind are in the highest perfection; my understanding clear and bright as ever; my judgment sound; my memory tenacious; my spirits good: and my voice, the first thing that fails others, still so strong and sonorous, that every morning and evening, with my dear grandchildren around me, I can address my prayers to the Almighty's gracious throne, and chant the praises of his redeeming love."

"O (exclaims the benevolent and happy old man,) how glorious this life of mine!—Replete with all the felicities which man can enjoy on this side the grave: and exempt from that sensual brutality which age has enabled my better reason to banish, and therewith all its bitter fruits, the extravagant passions, and distressful perturbations of mind. This is the happiness of those only, who grow old in the ways of temperance and virtue: a happiness which seldom attends the most flourishing youth who live in vice. Such are all subject to a thousand disorders, both of body and mind, from which I am entirely free: on the contrary, I enjoy a

thousand pleasures, which are pure as they are calm." (CORNARO.)

To the voluptuary, I would say, go thou and do likewise. Thou art wretched in the midst of all thy mirth and revelling. Thou hast often wished thyself anything but what thou art. Thou enviest a slave—a beast of burden! Thou art oppressed—almost crushed—and yet borne along in folly's train by, what thou esteemest, an irresistible torrent. But where is thy resolution and thy courage? Hast thou advanced so far as to dread the ridicule and the reproaches of thy besotted companions? Learn wisdom from the considerate Italian: and like him, leave thy companions in good earnest. Betake thyself to temperance and sobriety: and thou mayest outlive them all half a century. Thou shalt see them, one after another, laid under the cold clod of the valley, whilst thou art yet in the vigour of thy days. Will not this recompense thee for a momentary endurance of their witless sneers?

Arise then, ere it be too late, and assert that dignity which is in thy nature, and of which thou art so fond of boasting. Be no longer dragged downwards to infamy and death by thy pleasures, like an ox to the slaughter. Shake off the *vile* degrading badges of thy servitude: they do not become thee. Live—and live like a man of reason; not worse than a brute which is guided by instinct only. Live—and live as becomes the aspiring candidate for the richest prizes in fortune's gift. Live—and live as a patriot who loves his country, and is resolved to devote himself to her service. Live—and

live as ought the votary of science; the lover of truth; the dispenser of good; the advocate of virtue; the friend of man. Live, and do justice to thyself, to thy family, to the Republic, and to the world. Live, and learn so to number thy days as to apply them all to wise, and generous, and noble purposes.

There is then encouragement to attempt a reform. The drunkard, and the sensualist of every description, may reform; and so reform as to be useful and happy, if he will set about the work before his constitution be utterly destroyed. And the life of the reformed Cornaro proves that it is worth the effort. Do I speak in the hearing of one individual abandoned to sensual pleasures, or strongly inclined to them? Escape for your life. It is not yet too late. Desist instantly; and your victory is sure: and it will be complete. The world, with all its stores and honours and emoluments, is still before you. You may yet possess all that your ambition prompts you to strive for.

But, are you still on the safe side? You will do wisely to remain there. Few have ever been so fortunate or so wise as to enterprise the difficult task of reformation—as all past experience fully demonstrates. Of all the drunkards and rakes who have ever lived in the world, not one in a thousand has succeeded like Cornaro or Gardiner. It is rashness therefore to presume on such an issue.

I have thus far considered the world, and its good things, as they usually appear to the great mass of mankind, who do not extend their views and their hopes to

futurity. I have dwelt chiefly on the virtue of temperance — of temperance as opposed to every species of sensuality — as essential both to long life and to the attainment of the ordinary objects of human desire and pursuit. But temperance, it is obvious, is not of itself sufficient for all these purposes. Temperance may be a mere negative quality.

Industry — persevering diligence — all the world acknowledge, is equally necessary to success in any great undertaking. It is the decree of worldly wisdom therefore that man must labour, if he would be eminent in any sphere or calling. This is true in regard to every employment or profession, however humble or however respectable in itself. Men become rich by industry and prudence and skilful management. Is wealth then your object? You may be wealthy by pursuing the course which wisdom points out as the sure path to its acquisition. And here let me add, that the world has adopted the maxim, that "honesty is the best policy." You must be honest therefore if you would be rich and honourable at the same time.

Would you be learned? Industry is indispensable here also. An idle man has never been distinguished for learning. The talents of a Solomon would not suffice without diligence. You may say what you will about genius; there is no royal road to science. The man of genius must labour, and labour long, or he will die unnoticed and unknown. The fact is that men of the strongest intellects have usually been the most indefatigable in their efforts to improve their minds by study.

And when you see a person affecting to despise study and labour as beneath him—as degrading to his genius—as a kind of reflection on his talents—you may set him down for a weak, shallow-minded man: as utterly destitute of that commanding genius which he arrogates to himself, and which he fain would have others concede to him. Look at Pythagoras, and Socrates, and Plato, and Aristotle, and Demosthenes, and Tully, and Selden, and Bacon, and Newton, and Jones, and Burke, and Edwards, and all the bright ethereal spirits who have shed a lustre on the world by their superior wisdom and attainments. Did they content themselves with a complacent sluggish contemplation of their own mighty genius; and expect the world to do them reverence on that account?

I have often looked with infinite pity on deluded youth at college, who were ashamed to appear studious, lest they should be thought dull, by those who were too ignorant or too stupid to distinguish talent from the noisy ebullition of mere animal spirits. Thus it happens that many a youth at college takes special pains to avoid study altogether, that he may pass for a marvellous genius. Men of real genius and rare learning however, all the world over, will concur in declaring that all such youth act foolishly and absurdly. Let them therefore learn so to number their days as to apply their hearts unto wisdom. Three or four years wasted in college will prove to them a loss irreparable. Such a loss may doom them to insignificance while they live. At any rate, whatever may be their future diligence, it

will prevent their accomplishing much, which they might otherwise have easily achieved. "Whatsoever [therefore] thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest." This is the legitimate dictate of human, no less than of divine wisdom.

Nor ought the habit of industry ever to be intermitted or suddenly relaxed. It ought to be maintained through life. The best preservative of mental or corporeal vigour, is constant mental or bodily exercise. It is a great mistake in any man to give up the business or employment to which he has long been accustomed, with a view to the enjoyment of peace and quiet in old age. It is peculiarly unwise in a student to do this. When he relaxes, or relinquishes study, his intellectual powers rapidly decline, and he soon sinks into second childhood. Whereas, should he persevere in his usual efforts, or explore new fields of science with a youthful ardor, he would probably retain his faculties unimpaired to the last—as has been frequently witnessed in fact.

It is related of the late learned Dr. Macknight, that, after he had published his elaborate work on the Apostolical Epistles, at the age of seventy four, he considered himself as having accomplished the greatest object of his life. And wishing to enjoy, at the close of his days, some relief from his labours, he resisted the repeated solicitations of his friends, who urged him to undertake the illustration of another portion of Scripture on the same plan; and abandoned study altogether. The

consequence was, a sensible and immediate decay of his faculties. "This fact (says his biographer,) is a striking instance of the analogy between the powers of the body and those of the mind; both of which suffer by inaction; and it furnishes a useful caution to those who have been long habituated to any regular exertion of mind, against at once desisting entirely from its usual efforts; since the effect, in the course of nature, is not only to create languor, but to hasten the progress of debility and failure."

Thousands of similar and much more melancholy instances might be adduced. It is important for youth to know the fact. It would be well for the aged to learn wisdom from its frequent occurrence. Let no man—let no student especially—look forward to an old age of ease and indolence as desirable. Let him rather resolve, at the outset, to labour, according to his strength, to the very last moment of his existence: and never to amuse his fancy with the illusive prospect of retirement and indulgence, when he shall reach the age of fifty, or sixty, or seventy. The mere cherishing of such an idea will greatly contribute to the end anticipated. The safest plan therefore is to determine beforehand never to give over: and then there will be no temptation to so hazardous a course.

Long life, I have said, is an object of primary importance, and ought, above all other things, to be aimed at by a wise man of the world. I have shown that excessive carnal indulgences tend directly and most certainly to shorten life. I might just add, in passing, that an

intemperate pursuit of any earthly good has tne same tendency. We see men every day hazarding life, and losing life, to acquire or to preserve honour, and wealth, and power, and fame. Thus the duellist murders his friend, and is himself murdered in the field of honour. Thus the avaricious man often falls an early sacrifice to his toils, and cares, and self-denial. Thus too, thousands are daily perishing the victims of an inordinate ambition. Such men do not act wisely or consistently. Had they grasped at less, they would have obtained the more, and enjoyed it longer. They ought first to have counted the cost—to have ascertained the value of the object in view, and the safest road to it—and not to have blindly jeoparded their all at a single venture, and that too with the chances decidedly against them. I might illustrate my general position by descending to a great variety of particulars: by touching on all the pursuits, and plans, and objects which engross the attention of busy mortals:—but I forbear. It is manifest that the idle, the imprudent, the dishonest, and the intemperate of every sort, do not consult their own true interests in any respect or degree. They do not take the road that leads to a good old age—to wealth—to honour—to real pleasure—or to any one object which the world itself pronounces worthy of their chief regard.

In pursuing somewhat further the train of our thoughts, we might notice other modes and features of human conduct, which would appear equally inconsistent with the principles of sound wisdom, seeing that life, at best, is so exceedingly short and uncertain.

Thus far we have given the world full scope and fair play, and allowed all its claims to our regard to be valid. But have we not gone too far and conceded too much? Here will I hold, cries the worldling, while life or breath or being lasts! But, what a pity, exclaims the aged miser as he hugs his treasure to his bosom, and feels that his final hour is at hand,—"Oh, what a pity that man must die!" Behold the gall and the wormwood which embitter every cup of human bliss! Man must die!

The longest life is far too short to reach the height to which ambition aspires; or to gain the wealth which avarice covets. Alexander was yet a youth when the world obeyed his mandate: and had he conquered a dozen worlds, he would have sighed for more. Ambition and avarice, the two master passions of the soul, were never satisfied. They cannot be satisfied. But men may have enough of all that this world can give, to answer every purpose of comfort or enjoyment. Such a sufficiency is easily acquired. "Man wants but little here below, nor wants that little long." This is indisputably the fact. It is no poetic fiction. Neither the wealth of Croesus, nor the power of Cæsar, would add one iota to the happiness of their possessor, beyond what millions may enjoy with a fair competency of this world's goods.

What sentence then does wisdom pronounce on all those who are hoarding up riches as if they expected to live forever to enjoy them, and as if the life of soul and body depended on their acquisition?—On all those turbulent ambitious spirits who are, or who fain would be, turning the world upside down for power and fame?—

On all those restless discontented beings who are ever in search of, they know not what; who are wandering, they know not whither; who are never satisfied with what they are, or with what they have, but are perpetually coveting and seeking something which lies beyond their reach?

If peace of mind be the standard and the source of happiness, and if this depend not chiefly or essentially on our external condition in the world: why need we be so extremely anxious about it? Does not reason teach us that the wisest and the happiest life is that which occasions the least pain or uneasiness to ourselves and others—which is uniformly tranquil, calm, and cheerful—spent in acts of kindness and beneficence—aiding and enlivening our fellow-travellers along this vale of tears—leading on the noiseless tenor of our days, loving and being beloved—with the smile of benevolence on our countenance and the joy of contentment in our hearts?

The brevity of life is a constant satire upon most human pursuits; at least, when carried to the extreme which is usually witnessed. Why, in the name of earthly wisdom and plain common sense, do we pervert the end of our existence, in thus courting danger, pain and vexation, when the present moment is all we can call our own:—in thus creating to ourselves so many sources of misery as well as avenues to death, when no adequate remuneration can, on our own principles, be expected:—in thus rivetting our affections to objects which we must leave soon, and we know not how soon?

We must die! This single consideration, which no

sophistry can banish or conceal from our minds at all times, is enough to cause our hearts to faint within us, and to blast all our worldly hopes forever. For disguise this unwelcome truth as we will—put off the evil day as far as we dare—still the king of terrors will invade our sanctuary, will steal across our path, and stare us full in the face, when we fain would shun him most; and perhaps when we profess or affect to fear him least. When alone and thoughtful,—how often do the glooms of despair gather upon the countenance, and the sigh of anguish rend the bosom? "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity and vexation of spirit!"—do we often exclaim from bitter experience, with as much emphasis and meaning, as did the wise man of old, after a thorough trial of this world's enjoyments in all their abundance and variety.

The conclusion then at which we arrive, after this hasty survey of human life, and maxims, and pursuits, and enjoyments, is briefly this. That, as we are dying creatures and cannot acquire a permanent possession here, wisdom bids us so to number our days as to take the good of them while they are going. For we shall soon find to our sorrow that they have passed away like a dream when one awaketh. The utmost that we can reasonably hope for from this fleeting world is to travel on quietly and serenely through it. Wisdom therefore, with a loud voice, cries out to all the children of men, saying: away with moroseness, austerity, ill-nature, pride, envy, jealousy, malice, revenge, avarice, ambition—with every inordinate lust and appetite and

passion. Seek the good that is in the world, but seek it temperately. Be contented with your condition: at least, do not make yourselves wretched because you cannot change or improve it. Use the world, but abuse it not. Be honest, sober, diligent, generous, benevolent. Live peaceably with all men, if possible. Deserve their esteem and confidence by your virtues. Court not their favour by flattery or base compliances. Improve all your faculties to their utmost extent of capacity; and become the lights and benefactors of mankind.

Hitherto we may be thought to have been pursuing rather a heathenish track: and yet we have arrived at results, in some respects, very similar, though in others, very dissimilar to those which revealed religion recognizes.

PART II.

Genuine heavenly wisdom, or the religion of the Bible, prescribes to mortals a course of life, of all others, the happiest, wisest, best; even though there were no hereafter. It directs to a course of life, which reason cannot but approve as most eligible and desirable, all things considered.

The Christian religion enjoins no self-denial, no sacrifice, which a wise man of the world would not or ought not to impose on himself. It inculcates all the virtues which can adorn and dignify human nature. It condemns all the vices and practices which have any tendency to injure or degrade it. Would you then live wisely and happily? Live as Christians are commanded to live. There is not one moral or practical precept in the Bible which would not, if duly regarded, contribute to your welfare even in this world.

Now it is the beauty and the perfection of the Christian religion that it contemplates and provides for both worlds at the same time. It tells men how to be happy on earth, and how to be happy in heaven. And it so unites the future with the present, that, while we are seeking the one, we necessarily secure the other. By seeking first the kingdom of God, we make sure of as much happiness on earth as we are capable of enjoying. Here then you perceive, at a single glance, the immense advantage which the Christian system has over all

others. "The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it."

II. We told you in the beginning of this discourse, that we intended, in the second place, to consider this life as a state of preparation for another and a better: and to inquire what true wisdom or true religion demands of us; or how we ought to number our days so as to apply our hearts unto wisdom. A few general remarks under this head must suffice.

Contemplating then our whole nature—the welfare of soul and body, for time and for eternity: the question is, How ought we to live, so as to live wisely and consistently with the grand purpose of our creation and the high destiny that awaits us?

To live wisely, or to apply our hearts unto wisdom, is undoubtedly to live precisely as God would have us to live:—To live as he commands us to live.—To think, to desire, to love, to believe, to speak, to act, agreeably to the will of God. This is true wisdom: and this it is to be religious. Nor will human reason interpose a single objection to this statement—while made in such general terms.

It may be asked indeed; what is the divine will?—how can it be discovered?—where is it declared?—or who can unfold it? This inquiry has often been agitated. But we have neither time nor inclination, at present, for any formal argument upon this point. We answer at once, and with the most perfect assurance, that the will of God is fully revealed to us in the Bible. If not revealed in the Bible, then are we in total dark-

ness in regard to the nature, character, government, purposes and will of God; and in regard to our own duty, happiness and final destination. And all speculations upon these momentous subjects would be absurd and bootless. We might weep or laugh at all human pursuits and events, as best suited our constitutional temperament: and this world's philosophy could never tell us which were the wiser course; or whether wisdom or folly could be justly predicated of any human system or conduct whatever—in reference at least to the divine will, and to a future existence.

What some men style the light of nature, and the religion of nature, and which they fain would substitute for the light and religion of the Bible, they have not yet rendered visible or intelligible even to the initiated few of their own little school—much less to the great mass of those whose organs of perception are less acute, or whose moral sensibilities are more obtuse.

To the Bible then, with unwavering confidence, and with reverential gratitude, do we appeal for all the knowledge and wisdom which we need or can ever hope to attain. The Bible contains the law of God—the entire code of statutes and regulations which he has ordained for the safety, good order and well-being of us, his intelligent and accountable subjects. This law is binding on all of us without exception. It is binding on all men to whom it has been, now is, or ever will be promulgated. I say nothing of that portion of our race to whom this law has never been sent or officially proclaimed. I leave them to the sovereignty, wisdom,

justice and goodness of the righteous Judge of all the earth—not doubting that they will receive at his tribunal a fair trial and an equitable award. But wherever this law is known or can be known, there it admits of no compromise with human inventions or devices. Upon all men, to whom the Bible is accessible, or who can possibly become acquainted with its contents, the divine law fastens in all its length and breadth—in all its provisions and sanctions—with all its terrors, threatenings, penalties, promises and rewards. It cannot be dispensed with; nor can it be evaded by any artifice or contrivance.

By the law, I now mean the whole revelation of God, as contained in the Old and New Testaments—everything intended to direct us in duty and to qualify us for glory—the whole system of moral precepts, as well as the whole system of grace—the tables written by the finger of God upon Sinai's tremendous mount, and the sacrifice upon Calvary to redeem us from bondage to sin and death.

Will any man pretend that God has no right to give a law to his own creatures? or that, when given, they are at liberty to obey or reject or transgress it at their pleasure? or that they may obey one part, and violate another? or that they are not obligated to obey at all, until after they have publicly and formally signified their approbation and acceptance of the law, and promised to obey it? How would such logic be estimated, if employed in regard to the law of the land in which we dwell? What would be said or thought of a malefactor who should choose to say to his judge, or to the court:

"Sir, or your honours, please to excuse me. I do not acknowledge your jurisdiction. I do not approve your code. I never intended to be governed by it. I always asserted my independence of its control and sanctions. Let me alone until I profess myself willing to obey, and thereby become amenable at your bar." Yet such is the sophistry resorted to by immense multitudes of intelligent men throughout Protestant Christendom. They persuade themselves that, if they do not make a public profession of religion, or attach themselves to some particular Christian church as the avowed disciples of Christ, they may, with a clear conscience, indulge in all the amusements and pleasures, and engage in all the pursuits, which are not condemned by an irreligious world. They fancy that, so long as they keep out of the church, they are free. Or, in other words, that God's law has no concern with them, without their own consent.

I do not attempt to tell you, in detail, what this law requires, or what it prohibits. I do not say that it commands you to become Presbyterians, or Baptists, or Methodists, or Episcopalians: or to be called of Paul, or of Cephas, or of Luther, or of Calvin, or of Arminius.

But it is the duty of every man to become what the Bible commands him to become; and to do what the Bible commands him to do; and to abstain from all practices which the Bible interdicts. It is his duty, moreover, to read and study the Bible, in order fully to comprehend the law and the will of his Maker, his Sovereign, and his Judge. Ignorance can never be ad-

mitted as an apology for any transgression—at least, from those who may know the law if they will. All such ignorance is but an aggravation of guilt.

If then, to believe in Christ, to obey the precepts of Christ, to repent of sin, and to lead holy lives, be enjoined on all men to whom the gospel is preached, or to whom the divine law is promulged: what do we mean by saying that they may do this or omit that, because they are not believers, or because they are not members of the church? While, on the other hand, they harshly censure and denounce the professing Christian, for doing the very things which they unblushingly do every day, and which they imagine they may do with impunity?

Brethren, I take leave here to tell you, that, it is lawful for every Christian man—for every church elder or ruler—for every minister of the gospel—to do whatever any of you may lawfully do. And whatever you would condemn them for doing, and yet do the same yourselves, you stand condemned before God and the world—yourselves being the judges. Now there are many practices and amusements and pleasures, which men account very harmless and innocent, perhaps very honourable and useful and laudable; and should their utility or propriety be questioned by a clergyman, or should he censure them or expose their pernicious tendency and consequences, or boldly denounce them as contradictory to the divine commandments, he would be stigmatized as an officious, intermeddling disturber of the peace and harmony of society, as a morose, churlish cynic, or as a narrow-minded illiberal bigot. And yet—mark their consist-

ency—let the clergyman himself indulge in these very same harmless and innocent and useful and commendable practices and amusements and pleasures, and a hundred tongues would instantly exclaim: What a hypocrite! what a disgrace to the Christian name! what a wolf in sheep's clothing! He a minister of the gospel, and yet mingle in all the fashionable follies of the world! What a monster!

Softly, my charitable hearers! You just now pronounced all these things very innocent, very praiseworthy, very befitting to yourselves; but the moment you meet a Christian in your company, you instantly rise up indignant, and, with one voice, deal out your anathemas against him, as if he had been guilty of the most flagitious offences. Can that act be *honest*, which would subject an honest man to the charge of knavery, if he were detected in the commission of it? Can that amusement or practice be innocent and Christian, or even harmless and indifferent, which could justly expose a Christian man to obloquy and censure if he were to indulge in it?

Here then is a criterion by which you may judge of your own conduct and spirit; however fallible or false it may be in fact, or in its general application. You are very sagacious perhaps in descrying the faults of those who profess to believe the gospel. Let this sagacity avail you for a better purpose. In regard to all your projected schemes and pursuits and pleasures: pause and consider what you would think if a member of your church were to engage in them. If you would account

them unlawful for him, then are they unlawful for you. And you will proceed at your peril; against knowledge and conviction.

To say the least, that man must possess a very reasonable share of effrontery, who can habitually practise what he would condemn a Bible Christian for practising. He carries a beam in his own eye, and yet fancies that he has the right and the ability to pull the mote out of his brother's eye. Well may the real Christian appeal from the tender mercies of all such men to the judgment of his peers.

While men continue out of the church, they frequently act as if they, and they only, were fairly entitled to all the good things of this world. I am not going to controvert their claims. I may be allowed however just to ask, whence they derive their right? Is it from God? And does God reward them for disobedience? And do they verily believe that, while they neither serve, love nor honour God, they have a better title to all the varied bounties of his Providence, than his own sincere, faithful, obedient children? But I might multiply interrogatories, and enumerate inconsistencies and absurdities, on this score, without end.

Now, lest the purport of some of my remarks should be mistaken, I add, that I do not mean to intimate that a man should profess publicly to love and honour the law of God and the gospel of Christ, at the moment when he is meditating murder or robbery or fraud or any species of iniquity in his heart. Or that he should profess at all what he neither believes nor designs to

perform. He would thus be adding falsehood and perjury and hypocrisy to the catalogue of his crimes. The divine law forbids both the one and the other. The truth is, however, the man who violates the law in one mode, would violate it in twenty modes, or in every mode, if he could do it with equal advantage and honour. It is not the divine law which he respects, or which restrains him in the least. He habitually pours contempt upon the law by his habitual infraction of it.

God commands all men everywhere to repent and to believe in Christ. This command was first proclaimed in Judea. The great body of the Jews disregarded it—despised it—rejected the Messiah—adhered to their old system—lived agreeably to their own views of fitness and expediency, of profit, pleasure and happiness. Were they therefore guiltless? Did they escape condemnation and punishment? Let their history speak: and let their history disclose the infatuation and madness and misery of those who dare neglect the great salvation, or make light of Jehovah's mandate. It was precisely for disbelieving the gospel—for refusing to enter the Christian church—for withholding their assent and obedience to the divine commands—that the vials of Heaven's vengeance were poured out upon them, in a measure and to an extent, unparalelled in the history of our race. Let their example warn and instruct us.

It is marvellous that any man should flatter himself, that, while he is the open avowed enemy of God, while he disclaims his authority, and tramples upon all his laws and institutions, while he ridicules and contemns,

or scornfully neglects the provisions of his grace, he is *therefore* permitted to go at large—is *therefore* irresponsible and out of danger—is *therefore* honest, independent, honourable, brave, magnanimous. Such however is the fact. What a glorious creature does not man become, as soon as he ceases to be, in his own view, a subject of Heaven's government! An archangel once deemed it better to reign in Hell than to serve in Heaven. What rewards and honours he may yet have in reserve for those who follow his example and enlist under his banners, I am not able to advertise you. It would be well for all concerned, however, diligently to inquire, whether his favours are not limited exclusively to this world; and amount after all to nothing more than a mere recruiting premium or bounty offered at the outset to allure the ignorant and unwary to his standard.

Man is endued with reason. And he not only has a right—it is his duty—to exercise his reason in inquiries concerning religion. The Christian religion shrinks not from reason's most rigid scrutiny. She, on the contrary, invites it, challenges it, commands it. This in regard both to the evidences of her whole system, and to the nature of every particular doctrine, fact and precept. She asks no man to do violence to his reason, nor to believe anything which it is not more reasonable to receive than to reject. That she should exhibit facts and doctrines, mysterious and incomprehensible, such as without a revelation could never have occurred to the human mind, is not repugnant to reason. It is precisely what reason ought to have expected. The ques-

tion is not, whether reason could have discovered these truths? It is conceded that she could not: and hence the necessity of a revelation. But the question is, whether it be more reasonable to believe what God has spoken and revealed, than to confide in our own feeble, confused, inconsistent, and ever varying conceptions and speculations?

Revelation informs us—and our reason cordially assents to the truth when revealed—that we are candidates for an eternal world. That this span of mortal existence—this inch or two of time—is not the whole of man's duration. That he is born an heir of immortality; and if he please, an heir of immortal glory. Admitting the fact, it follows that our chief, nay our only concern on earth ought to be so to live as to insure our eternal peace, welfare and salvation.

We came into the world to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever. So revelation teaches, and our reason again assents. In the beginning, God gave us a law, holy, just and good. This law we have broken, and thus have become criminal and guilty. So revelation declares: and that we are so in fact, our reason and conscience, our observation and experience, our hopes and our fears, conspire to prove. It is therefore as reasonable as it is scriptural, that we should repent and reform. Two difficulties are here worthy of particular notice.

First. No man, so far as we can learn from history or revelation, has ever yet so entirely reformed as to have lived perfectly obedient to the divine law during any given period whatever. He is therefore a transgressor

every day, and every day liable to the penalties of the law. How is he to be delivered? But,

Second. Were it possible for a man to break off from all his sins, and were he in fact to do so, and to continue obedient from the day of his repentance to the day of his death: yet repentance, even human reason being the judge, furnishes no atonement for past transgression. No personal sacrifices, or penances, or good deeds can satisfy public justice, or be accepted in lieu of the penalties threatened by the law. How then shall he escape? How can his guilt be expiated, and himself restored to the divine favour and to all his forfeited privileges?

Here indeed there is a mystery—a mystery which has hitherto baffled, and which will ever baffle the most profound researches of unenlightened human reason. But in the gospel, this mystery vanishes. And reason ought not to refuse to accept from revelation what it could never of itself have achieved. God has told us how his law can be magnified and made honourable in the pardon and justification of the offender. In the gospel, "mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." Psalm lxxxv. 10.

I give you an extract from the gracious record: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already; because he hath not believed in the

name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that Light is come into the world, and men loved darkness better than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God." John, iii. 16 to 21. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." John, i. 29.

Would you, my hearers, be happy and wise: happy on earth and happy forever? Obey the command—it is a command full of grace and mercy—"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ." His blood cleanseth from all sin. His infinitely meritorious obedience, sufferings and death have been accepted in the stead and in the behalf of his people. Sure I am that we all need an interest in the atoning sacrifice of this divine Redeemer. Sure too am I, that the most hardened and the most skeptical, whereever they are, oftentimes feel constrained to covet the Christian's hope and the Christian's heaven. No man is, or can be, so rich, or great, or powerful, or learned, or gifted, as not occasionally to behold his own utter nothingness in the presence of the adorable Majesty of Heaven and earth. Nor can he help suspecting that he is treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath. The loftiest intellect, the proudest spirit, shrinks from the presence of Jehovah. Death and judgment have terrors for the philosopher and the hero; as well as for the most ignorant and timid of mortals.

Sin, Death, Judgment, are ever in our way, and often fully in our view. Were we without sin, why should we fear death, or judgment, or the presence of our Maker? Were we innocent—perfectly innocent—we could fear nothing. We are conscious of guilt: and hence all our misgivings, and apprehensions, and terrors.

We are by nature at enmity with God—with that God who alone can make us happy—with hearts full of evil and ever inclined to evil—with our understandings darkened and our affections perverted—with the wrath of God abiding on us and the love of sin constraining us to continued disobedience. But help has been laid on one who is mighty to save. And proclamation has been issued by the Omnipotent Conqueror of sin and death and hell. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." Isa. xlv. 22. "Jesus saith unto him, I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." John, xiv. 6.

Jesus is the Sun and Centre of the whole system of divine revelation. He, as the promised seed that was to bruise the serpent's head, inspired all the hope and all the joy that the guilty parents of our race ever knew after the fall. He, as the predicted Messiah, who was, in the fulness of time, to give himself for his people, an offering and a sacrifice to God, (Eph. v. 2,) was typified, prefigured and represented by all the sacrifices, ceremonies and institutions of the Mosaic dispensation. To Him, patriarchs, prophets, kings and priests looked forward with an eye of faith, as the future Prophet, Priest

and King, who was "anointed to preach good tidings unto the meek: who was sent to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." Isa. lxxi. 1.

"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." Acts, iv. 12. Christ then is the Rock of ages upon which we build for heaven. We must begin and end with Christ—live by faith in Christ—rejoice in Christ—hope in Christ—die in Christ. Die with the martyr's faith in our hearts, and with the martyr's prayer to God his Saviour upon our lips: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Acts, vii. 59.

Behold the wisdom of God in the redemption of a guilty world. Behold the wisdom, which, if you obey her heavenly voice, will make you wise unto salvation. Behold the wisdom which is from above: "it is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy." James, iii. 17.

"Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding: For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace." Prov. iii. 13.

This is the wisdom which "is profitable unto all

things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." 1 Tim. iv. 8. "The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it." Prov. x. 22.

"Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding." Job. xxviii. 28.

"Wisdom is the principal thing: therefore get wisdom; and with all thy getting, get understanding." Prov. iv. 7.

Genuine heavenly wisdom will assure to you all the real good which this poor world can bestow. It will arm you against its sorrows and adversities. It will guard you against its ruinous seductions—preserve you from all its evils—allow you to taste its purest pleasures—give you riches and honours without pride or covetousness—or else enable you to live contented with poverty, and with whatever portion infinite wisdom may assign to you. It will conduct you, with consciences void of offence towards God and towards men, through this world's checkered scenery and varied fortune, to the pilgrim's peaceful and eternal home. It will lead you up to Immanuel's throne—to the paradise of God—where you shall flourish in immortal youth and vigour—grow in knowledge and wisdom till you pass the boundaries which Gabriel has reached—in holiness and happiness while an infinite God exists to expand your faculties and to supply their continually increasing capacities and desires.

ON THE IMPROVEMENT OF TIME.

[COLLEGE CHAPEL, PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY, 1822.]

THE IMPROVEMENT OF TIME.*

Redeeming the time.—*Ephesians*, v. 16.

It has ever been a subject of wonder and of grief to pious reflecting men, that the true value of time is so little understood. Mankind continually complain that life is short; and yet they seem never prepared to improve the present time as they ought. No man, however hardened or senseless or inconsiderate, can flatter himself with the certain prospect of many years to come, because his own daily observation proves to him, beyond the possibility of a doubt or of a hope, that the longest life ever allotted to mortals is but "a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." (James, iv. 14.)

But, although this great truth would be readily acknowledged by all men, were the question directly put to them; yet might one judge from their actions, he would certainly conclude that they expected to live always, or, at least, so long that nothing could appear of less value to them than time. This is one of those strange unaccountable inconsistencies between knowledge and practice to which poor depraved human nature is

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so exceedingly liable. It is so common indeed that we scarcely notice it either to our own shame or to the condemnation of others. I mean practically and beneficially. —For as a speculative truth, it is sufficiently hackneyed.

The shortness and uncertainty of human life—the folly, absurdity and inconsistency of most human pursuits—the unsatisfying nature of the objects which engage men's attention and engross their affections—have been the constant themes of the essayist, the poet, the declaimer, the satirist, the philosopher, the infidel and the believer, ever since the world began.

The Bible is full of precept, and warning, and example, on this score. The books of pagan antiquity abound with instructive lessons on these points. The Christian preacher is ever exhibiting to us the same facts and follies. So that our eyes and ears become sated and wearied with their ceaseless recurrence.

How then shall we venture upon topics so familiar to every individual, young and old? upon a track so beaten, that its whole course and end are described before we fairly enter upon it? I feel all the difficulty and the hazard of the undertaking. But there are many reasons which impel me to the almost hopeless task,—besides the laudable usage, which obtains in most Christian churches, of dwelling, at particular seasons, on such a theme.

When a year has just gone by, and gone forever from our reach, with all its joys and sorrows and cares and crimes and follies, it seems rational and proper that we should pause for a few moments to look back on the past and forward to the future. There is a propriety in such

a procedure which recommends it to the understanding, independently of the imperative duty which binds it on the heart and the conscience of every serious, thoughtful, immortal, accountable creature.

An hour of the last Sabbath in the year which has just retired, as it were, behind the scene, never more to reappear, is surely not too much to bestow on its memory. Another year has fled. It has perished. Shall we regard it as a departed friend, and celebrate its funeral obsequies with tears of grateful sorrow, and mournful recollections of the many endearing ties which it has rent in sunder? Or, as an enemy, which has ceased to annoy and to torment us; and therefore be disposed to congratulate ourselves upon our happy escape from it? But who would tread lightly or gaily upon the ashes of a fallen or vanquished foe? Has the last been to any of us a year of misery and anguish and disappointment? and are we ready to hail the approach of another, as the harbinger of brighter scenes and more substantial pleasures? Let us not triumph at the knell of departed years, though years of sadness and discontent. They too have a claim on our sympathy: and they may have been more our friends than at first we imagine.

When it was last my lot to address you from this place, the subject of meditation, you will recollect, was nearly allied to the one now under consideration. Several topics were then adverted to which might naturally present themselves to our view on this occasion. Much was then said on the brevity of life—on some of the ways in which it is usually misspent—and especially on certain

vices and follies to which youth are most exposed, and which have a direct tendency to destroy life—to blast all our hopes—and to defeat the end for which men generally think life desirable. It is not my purpose to travel over the same ground again. Though the strain of some of my remarks will, probably, be suggested by the same leading principles exhibited under a somewhat different aspect.

The original word, translated in our text, "redeeming," has a peculiar force, and implies *gaining* time or recovering what was lost. "Literally, *buying* time, as debtors do, who by giving some valuable consideration to their creditors, obtain further time for paying their debts." The apostle probably alluded to the enormities of the lives of the Ephesian Christians previously to their conversion, in which so much time had been lost and grossly abused. And the sense may be: endeavouring to recover and purchase back, as fast as possible, the time which they had wantonly thrown away, by making a diligent use of what remained, and by striving to improve it to the best and most valuable purposes.

The exhortation given to the Ephesian converts, was doubtless seasonable and appropriate. It well became *them* to redeem time, or to buy it off from other avocations, at the expense of much self-denial and watchfulness, who had devoted so much to vice and idolatry. It might with truth be said of them that they had but just begun to live in good earnest, when they embraced the gospel of Jesus Christ. They awoke, as it were, from a profound sleep; and beheld with grief and remorse, the

folly and wickedness of the past. They looked forward, and saw but a moment left them to fulfil the grand purpose of existence. They felt the necessity therefore of unceasing diligence in discharging the duties which were incumbent on them; and with which they had been made acquainted at so late an hour. Under such circumstances, and with such convictions, the passing moments must have been seized with eagerness, and devoted with trembling joy, to the service of the living God, and of Christ the Saviour, whom they had but just begun to fear, to honour, and to love.

Our situation, my friends, is materially different from that of the heathen world, when the gospel was first preached to them. We cannot urge an excuse, like theirs, for the time past of our lives which we have misspent. We have not even the poor consolation of reflecting that we have sinned from ignorance. We can fashion no apology which would satisfy even our own consciences, in a cool and serious hour, for the trifling, idle, unprofitable, criminal manner in which we have lived.

Is it necessary to inform you, or to prove to you, that you have wasted time? What species of demonstration can render a self-evident truth more evident? But conviction, unhappily, does not always accompany the clearest evidence and the most palpable truth. A proposition may be admitted as a mere truism, and yet its import may not be apprehended or regarded.

Come then, let us reason together a little on this point. Let us endeavour to bring our minds fairly and fully to the investigation. Have you the courage to inspect your

past lives? and the candour to pass an impartial sentence upon yourselves? You shall be your own censors and your own judges. I put the question: What have you been doing all your life long, or during the past year? Or rather, let every man put this question to his own heart. For none of you, not even the most confident and self-sufficient, would be willing to submit your whole conduct to the public eye. Do you then dread the scrutiny of fellow-sinners, who are no better than yourselves? What do you think of having your most secret thoughts, purposes, desires, as well as actions, fairly revealed and exhibited to the assembled universe—to the angelic hosts of heaven—to a holy, just, and sin-avenging God?

But the fact, lightly as it may be regarded, and seldom as you may advert to it, proves, that, at least, so much of your time as has been consumed in devising or executing any scheme, or in the unlawful gratification of any propensity, which you are either ashamed or afraid to disclose, has been worse than wasted. For this, past all doubt, you stand condemned before the tribunal of your own consciences, as well as before the heart-searching Judge, who cannot be deceived, and who will not be mocked.

I pass all enormous, flagitious, abominable crimes; all disgraceful, licentious extravagances and indulgences; and especially the degrading, ruinous practices of the gambler:—these can find no apologist in the light of day. They are fit only for those dark retreats into which they always skulk; and for those demons of darkness who always preside over them.

I say nothing of dishonesty and lying, which are so common in one shape or another, as that it has almost become a received maxim, that, "an honest man is the noblest work of God." And to have constrained our Saviour himself to exclaim in regard to one individual, as a great rarity: "behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile." On this subject, however, I merely remark, at present, that scarcely anybody will plead guilty to the charge, though he offend every day, under some specious disguise or self-deceiving pretext or other. It is so dishonourable to be deemed a liar or a knave, that a man would rather be a murderer, under the softening appellation of duellist, than to have his word or his integrity ever called in question.

But, what has been the general tenor of your lives—openly and above board—in face of the world? What have you done that was positively good? How much have you neglected to do that your acknowledged duty required? How much have you done that you knew to be positively wicked? What have been the motives and springs of action even in reference to those things which you esteem indifferent or praiseworthy? What ideas do you entertain of the design and object of life? Have you ever seriously tasked yourselves to contemplate its shortness, its uncertainty, its unspeakable value? Have you ever retired from the world to look into your own hearts, with a view to ascertain your real character; the end of your creation; the nature of your condition in this world; the relation which you sustain to the great Creator and Judge; the destiny which awaits you as immortal beings;

the glorious reward, the eternal heaven of blessedness which is promised to the faithful, and the interminable sufferings threatened to the disobedient hereafter? Unless you have made a *business*—a deliberate, solemn, prayerful business of this matter, you have done nothing. You have not yet even made a beginning, or an approach towards a right improvement of time. You have not yet taken the first step in the path of duty.

The glory of God—the will of God—the law of God—these have hitherto had no bearing on your conduct. If so, then every moment has been lost—lost forever. You cannot redeem it, except by drawing largely on the future. Not one year only, but all the years that you have lived are lost, wasted, abused, and registered in the court of heaven against you. For all this period, you are debtors. When or how will you cancel the account? This is the question which ought now to press home on your consciences with all the weight and interest of eternity. Thus far then, the matter is settled. Whatever time has passed in a way that you would blush to have known by your fellow-men, whatever has passed in a way inconsistent with, or independent of, the divine will, has assuredly been misspent.

But again: were I addressing an ordinary audience—an audience, I mean, consisting of persons engaged in the ordinary pursuits of the world—I might ask: which has appeared most important in your eyes, *time* or *money?* Of which have you been most tenacious—of which the most liberal? Have you been as free and ready to assist the needy and the suffering—to patronize charita-

ble institutions—to support the gospel—to contribute to objects of public utility—as you have been to dissipate time? Do you not think more of a shilling than of an hour? Would you not be more backward to give the former to any benevolent object than to waste the latter in whatever way you might be solicited? How seldom is it that you refuse your time to any who may choose to give you an idle call—while you would be grieved and vexed were half as many calls made upon your purse, even for the noblest purposes? And you would disregard them too.

Is it not true that the loss of a day or a week occasions less pain to most men than the loss of a little property? Is it not true also that they frequently calculate the value of lost time merely by the sum which they might have made during that time? And, if nothing could have been gained, then do they esteem it any loss at all? Is it reasonable that this should be the case? Is the worth of time to be measured by gold and silver? Was it to amass these that man was endued with angelic faculties—planted on this earth for a day—and when the day is ended, to be ushered into another world to exist forever—without the privilege of carrying with him a particle of his hard-earned and beloved treasures? God must have placed men in this world for some purpose: and, would it not be a mockery of the divine wisdom and goodness to suppose that the acquisition of property were the grand purpose of his being?

Have you not witnessed—and are you not fully convinced that wealth, honour, power, pleasure, are enjoyed

and held by a precarious tenure? That to-day, men may walk forth arrayed in purple and fine linen—the objects of envy to some, of admiration and servile flattery to others—while to-morrow, they may appear in sackcloth and ashes—outcasts in the streets, and none so poor as to do them reverence—derided and scorned by the very crowd, which now gaze and applaud, as though existence depended on their smile? And what do you infer from this caprice of fortune (as it is usually styled) to which men are so generally enslaved, and of which they so frequently fall the heedless and unpitied victims? What, but that all sublunary things are vain, mutable, transitory—incapable of gratifying rational, immortal natures —and therefore unworthy of your affection and your pursuit? Yet these are precisely the objects of human desire and ambition; and have been so in every age and country, since first the gates of Eden were closed against the guilty pair who led the way in this career of sin and ruin; and who have entailed the same blindness and infatuation on all their posterity.

Renouncing then these airy illusive goods, which never imparted a ray of solid comfort to the anxious seeker, or to the proud possessor of them, and which all must leave so soon at best: what remains to occupy our minds, and to call forth the active energies of our nature? Time—precious time is ours: and of this, none but God can deprive us. Time is our estate. This is our inheritance. It is our all. And on its right improvement depends our eternal welfare. Time is given us to lay up treasures in heaven—to prepare ourselves by submission, by patience,

by humility and self-denial, by penitence, faith, and prayer, during our pilgrimage through this wilderness of sorrow and temptation, for the full, the perfect, and the perpetual fruition of that Canaan of peace and plenty and rest and joy and glory, to which the faithful shall, at last, be welcomed.

Were this sublime, this glorious object constantly in view—were heaven steadily in our eye, could time ever hang heavily upon our hands? Could it seem tedious, dull, burdensome? Could we consent to lose so much in idleness, so much in unnecessary sleep, so much in trifling or profane conversation and amusement, so much in puerile or hazardous sports and games, so much in sensual indulgences, so much in a thousand frivolous and criminal modes, which the evil genius of this world has artfully devised to cheat men out of their most valuable possessions?

We have all erred in this matter. There is not an individual in this house—there is not a child of Adam on earth—who has not abused time. Nay more, there is not a day in which the best of men, when they review, at evening, their conduct during the day, do not find abundant cause of humiliation and repentance before God for their unfruitfulness, their sloth, or their forgetfulness of Him who has solemnly charged them to occupy till he come.

Who would ever conjecture from appearances that men were placed in the world merely as stewards—as tenants at will—as sojourners for a day—as pilgrims who are travelling to another and a better country—and to whom

therefore the accommodations and the entertainment, which they might chance to meet on their way, could be a matter of no very serious concernment? Who could ever suspect this when looking abroad among mankind, he beholds them everywhere pursuing a course directly contrary to such a destiny? Is man born for eternity, and is time given him for no other purpose than to prepare him for its enjoyment? Then, what does he mean by his conduct?

I seek in vain, says the observer, for a solution of this difficult problem. I see before me a vast multitude of intelligent beings, amounting in number, according to the best calculations, to, at least, nine hundred and fifty millions. All busy, gay, and thoughtless—while one would think there was nothing on earth capable of exciting a smile upon the countenance. Miserable, short-sighted creatures, he would exclaim, can you grasp at a shadow, and neglect that small pittance of time which is gone forever before you realize that you have begun to exist? See the dreadful havoc which the king of terrors is constantly making among you. Every hour, even in the ordinary course of events, he cuts down three thousand six hundred of your race. Every day witnesses his triumphs over more than eighty-six thousand. Every year he consigns to the grave above thirty-one millions of your giddy heedless brethren. And in a period of little more than thirty years, a number equal to the whole population of the earth fall victims to the great destroyer. That is, in the course of thirty years, nearly one thousand millions of mortals submit to the awful sentence

which will inevitably be executed on all the descendants of apostate Adam: "dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

Add to this, the sudden and amazing ravages which are frequently committed by fire and sword, by pestilence and famine, by hurricanes and tempests upon sea and land, by earthquakes and volcanoes, by revolutions in governments and by the vibrations of power from one tyrant or set of tyrants to another, by the ambition and cruelty of military despots and sanguinary aspiring demagogues.—See, men are the sport of death in an endless variety of ways! And yet, they alone seem insensible to their doom! Oh, if our observer have one tender cord in his soul—if his bosom be capable of one sympathetic emotion—if he be indeed a good angel—the tear of compassion will drop from his eye, as he contemplates the picture of human misery, and of human folly, thus exhibited to his view!

Were there any aged hearers present, I would appeal to them, and respectfully ask: what think you, venerable fathers, of this representation? Come, tell us your opinion of the theme in question. Let the voice of experience be heard within these walls. Let the warning of wisdom and of years be given to the young and rising generation. Say, fathers, do your threescore years and ten seem long now that they are past? Look back, and recount to us the joys of life. What are they?—For we fain would know them. Where are they?—For you doubtless, in your day, have been merry, and active, and successful. You have been subject, perhaps, to fewer

accidents and calamities than most of your fellow-men. You have had an opportunity, it may be, of viewing the brightest side of human life—of trying it, in its most advantageous form, and for the longest period. What are its pleasures? Alas, you search in vain the mighty waste of years never to be recalled. You sigh as you remember the visions of earthly bliss which delighted the fancy, and absorbed the mind of youth and manhood; but which have, long since, vanished away like a dream of the morning, or yielded only pain and sadness and disappointment. "Few and evil, you exclaim, have been the days of the years of our pilgrimage." Few and evil, do *you* acknowledge them to have been? *You* who have seen so many, and those too, apparently, so fair and joyous? Who then will deny that life is short? Who will affirm that evil does not mark its flight? Could you redeem the years that are gone—could you live life over again—would you spend it as you have done?

But, are your eyes, at length, opened upon the truth? Have you learned the worth of time? Can you impart sage and seasonable counsel to the youthful followers of your footsteps? Can you point out to them the rocks and shoals on which your frail bark had well nigh foundered? Or, are you still wedded to the same idols which you have hitherto worshipped to so little purpose? Still wandering in the same path which promised so many delights when you first entered it, but over which clouds and darkness have continued to rest? Why pursue a course, every step of which hurries you forward towards that deep gulf which is already half disclosed to your

view, and which will presently swallow you up forever? Why not desist? Why not stop short instantly? Why not seize the single moment that remains, and search out a new way—a way to peace, and purity, and heaven? Already have you arrived at the threshold of that narrow house which is appointed for all living. You are on the confines, and in sight of that world of spirits which must be your eternal home. What are fancy's fairy visions now?

Experience has taught you many serious lessons, and unfolded to you much of the real character of all human schemes, and hopes, and possessions. You have marked changes and alterations in everything around you. You have witnessed the most extraordinary revolutions, at home, and abroad. Empires, and kingdoms, and republics have risen and fallen; have flourished and been crushed, as it were, beneath your eye. Every year has borne testimony to the instability and emptiness of earthly pomp, and power, and grandeur. Look over the map of the world: what havoc, devastation and misery have attended the march of human society through the last fifty years? Where is the favoured spot on the face of our globe, which, during that short space, has remained tranquil, peaceful, and happy? What has been the lot of your own immediate neighbourhood—of your own little circle of friends and acquaintances? Where are the companions of your early days? Do you not begin to feel yourselves strangers in the land of your birth? One generation has sprung up after another around you. The ties which once endeared you to life—which bound

you to the world—which enchained your fond hearts to earthly joys—are burst in sunder. You stand almost alone—like the solitary traveller in a mighty desert. Your children, it may be, on whom you once so much doted, and whom you regarded as the props of your declining years, have followed the dear partner of your cares and your affections to the mansions of silence.

What then is left to render existence desirable? Why, after all these bitter trials and bereavements, are you not thoroughly weaned from the world? Why is not your heart, at last, fully set on heaven? Why do you not long for admission into that happy country, where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary be at rest? Why this reluctance to depart—whence this hesitation—this lingering in a land of so many woes? Why do you still cling to a world which has afforded you so little enjoyment; and which promises nothing but pain and mockery while you remain its votaries? Ah, it is because you tremble at the future! Conscience is now busy in summoning before her bar the actions of a long and thoughtless life. The ghosts of murdered hours and days and years haunt your imagination; and cause you to startle, and to shrink back with horror from the awful reckoning which awaits you, when the brittle thread of life shall break, and usher you into the presence of the righteous and terrible Judge.

What spectacle in creation is more pitiable than that of a venerable old man, just tottering on the brink of the grave, whose past life gives no pleasing anticipations for the future? What more horrible than that of a notori-

ously wicked old man—a hoary-headed miser, or knave, or drunkard, for instance? Suppose him utterly insensible to his own fate: do we not instinctively shudder at the prospect before him, and regard him as the most perfect example of hardened depravity, and stupid infatuation, which can be found upon earth? Suppose him not indifferent—suppose him awakened, at last, to all the dangers of his situation—but in despair! See him on his bed of languishing and death; sensible that the hand of God is upon him; groaning under a weight of bodily pains and infirmities, sufficient of themselves to exclude every other concern, but which to him are nothing to the fiercer torments, the unspeakable agonies of the mind; discerning no ray of hope or mercy through the utter darkness which surrounds him; no kind angel near to uphold his sinking spirit, or to guide him through the dismal valley which is opening fast upon his view:—What would he not give for one day, for one hour, to seek an interest in that Saviour whom he has hitherto neglected or despised, and to fit him for his flight into the world unknown? The gold of the Indies would be lighter than vanity if balanced against a moment. "Time, time," exclaimed Queen Elizabeth, when on her death-bed, "a world of wealth for an inch of time!" No, brethren, time cannot be purchased with thrones or empires—else had kings been beggars to redeem an hour.

A death-bed shows us what time is good for: and the monarch then can command no more of it than the slave. "Oh, the universe for an inch of time," might the proudest despot that ever swayed a sceptre well exclaim in the

article of death: but no, vain mortal, the handwriting of the eternal Judge hath appeared on the wall against thee —"Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting." A death-bed, too, teaches us the real value of all earthly distinctions and possessions.

You are doubtless familiar with the very interesting and instructive account, given by Herodotus, of an interview between Crœsus and Solon. The Lydian monarch had directed his servants to conduct Solon to the different repositories of his immense wealth, and to show him all their splendid and valuable contents. After which, he demanded of the sage, what man of all whom he had ever seen, seemed to him the most happy? The expectation of being himself esteemed the happiest of mankind prompted his inquiry. You know the reply. It was not Crœsus. It was Tellus. To a second inquiry by the astonished and disappointed prince, the honest Athenian named Cleobis and Biton. He then explains the principles on which he grounds his apparently strange and uncourtly estimate; and the reasons for giving the preference to men of comparatively private and mean condition, over the proudest, the richest, and most luxurious potentate of Asia. And, in the conclusion, he adds: "Call no man happy, O king, till you know the nature of his death. It is the part of wisdom to look to the event of things; for the Deity often overwhelms with misery, those who have formerly been placed at the summit of felicity."*

* The whole passage, which is too long to be quoted, is a beautiful specimen of heathen morality and wisdom. It might put to the blush

Such was the judgment of Solon. But had Solon ever heard of that immortality which the gospel reveals, he would have judged more wisely still. His views reached not beyond the threescore years and ten, upon which he so beautifully (I had almost said so *Christianly*) expatiates; and yet he refuses to pronounce any man happy, till death shall have set his seal to his whole career. And who will not accord with Solon in the same judgment? In reading the story of human greatness, do we not always make up our opinion of its value according to its termination? Does not Crœsus himself afford an example of the correctness of Solon's criterion? Who does not regard him as an unhappy man, notwithstanding all the magnificence with which he was once surrounded? Who does not pity his lot? And the same sentiment invariably and involuntarily arises in our minds in regard to every distinguished individual whose end has been wretched. I mean in reference to this world only. Where is the exception in all the records of human grandeur, "from Macedonia's madman to the Swede?" Who would covet the power of Cæsar, to die by the hand of an assassin? Who would live the life of a Cromwell, to be ever in dread at the shadow of friend or foe—and to expire in despair at last? Who would be a Bonaparte, to rule the world for a few years; then to live the by-word and scorn of the nations who once trembled at his name; to perish, at length, like a malefactor; an exile, an outcast from human society?

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many a Christian philosopher, and many a Christian courtier and counsellor.

Solon would have pronounced these, and a thousand such, unhappy. He would have preferred the life of an obscure inglorious peasant—the even tenor of whose days had never been interrupted by one ambitious sigh, or enlivened by one courtly smile. And so do we. But these are extreme cases. True, they are so. They are instructive however as far as they go. Suppose, then, we could remove the veil which conceals the future from the present, and contemplate the death-scene of those kings and nobles and heroes and worthies, those rich men, and great men of every name and character whom we most admire, whose condition in the world appears most enviable—whom we fain would be like if we could: suppose we could follow their spirits into the eternal world, and witness their character and destiny there: I ask, is there a man in the universe, who would not decide on their happiness by what should then be disclosed, rather than by what they were, or by what they possessed in this life? Suppose you should behold them sinking down from their thrones and palaces into the pit of darkness and horror, "where their worm dieth not, and where the fire is not quenched"—would you envy them any more? Would you then call them happy? Would they any longer be the objects of blind admiration and eulogy? No—not one of them. No—not if he had possessed ten thousand times the wealth and wisdom and power of Crœsus and Solomon and Napoleon combined. Not a mortal has ever yet existed so great and honourable as would tempt you to exchange your humble lot for his, if you knew that misery were his doom after life's poor play

had ended. You had rather live a slave and die an heir of glory, than live a monarch and lose your soul at last.

Now, Christ has taught us, that, it is hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God—"hard for them that trust in riches"—implying also, that it is extremely difficult for a rich man not to trust in riches. The same may be affirmed of all the objects of human desire and ambition. When inordinately pursued, they become a snare, and prove the destruction of their idolatrous votaries. Facts universally corroborate this statement. Very few of the great men of this world have ever yet been truly humble pious men. Go to the palaces of kings—to the castles of noblemen—to the mansions of the wealthy—and let charity speak her kindliest sentiments in regard to their inmates. Will she not be constrained to respond in the language of inspiration: "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called?"—"It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God?"

I know how offensive this representation usually is to this world's favourites; and I know too how adroitly some preachers contrive to serve it up in a palatable form, so as to leave men in the quiet pursuit and possession of their idols. But we have not so learned Christ. His kingdom is not of this world. It is a spiritual kingdom. And any man of common sense, who will reflect on the subject, may easily perceive, that, to devote one's life to the eager pursuit of earthly objects of any kind, is

not cultivating a spirit of self-denial and mortification—is not becoming more and more weaned from the world—is not avoiding temptation, but courting it in its most dangerous forms—and taking the most direct course to the very opposite of all that the gospel recommends and enjoins.

The gospel gains nothing by any compromise with the world. Nor does the world gain anything by such a compromise. It is as absurd as it is wicked to deceive ourselves, or to suffer others to deceive us in this concern. We cannot serve God and Mammon. We cannot cultivate that temper and cherish those affections which are congenial with heaven, while we are intent on a fortune—while we are intriguing for office—while the soul is all anxiety about some, no matter what, mere temporal good.

I do not say that it is impossible for a man to acquire riches, or to be elevated to honourable stations, and to be faithful as a steward of God at the same time. But it is very hard—very difficult—very rare. A wise man would not be willing to run the hazard. He would see that the chances are greatly against him. He would discern the dangers which beset the path of the numerous candidates for worldly distinctions, and he would carefully avoid this path. His prayer to God would be: "Remove far from me vanity and lies; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain."

A death-bed is a fair touch-stone by which to try the character of earthly things. Let wealth, rank, power, office, fame, philosophy, pleasure, be brought to this test; and you shall read "vanity of vanities" inscribed on them all, as objects of our chief desire or main pursuit.

These then are not the objects which demand our time and our hearts. Had we nothing else to live for—to hope for—life would not be worth a thought. That there is an object of infinite and eternal moment to engage our mind; and yet that these should principally, or rather supremely, engross it, is a moral phenomenon which will excite the astonishment of all intelligent creation while the universe exists. It will astonish the inhabitants of hell, no less than the hosts of heaven, so long as one monument of this folly can be found in all the dominions of the Almighty. Shall we blindly walk in the steps of the millions who have already perished, and of the millions who are still perishing, the voluntary slaves of this world's cruel, implacable master? Shall any of us go from the healthful fountain of science and religion—of enlightening, ennobling science—of purifying, exalting, heavenly religion—to degrade ourselves to a level with the meanest, most ignorant, most grovelling of Mammon's deluded victims? God forbid!

The little assembly, which usually meets in this college chapel, is an apt epitome of the great world of which we read—which, for six thousand years past, has been uniform in nothing but in changes. Every year—every month effects some change among us. Friends and com-

panions, esteemed pupils, venerable fathers and teachers leave us. Strangers come and occupy their seats, and find a place in our affections. Now an individual goes—and an individual arrives. Now a multitude depart together, bid farewell to their *Alma Mater*, disperse to the four winds of heaven, and are lost from our view in the mighty throng of busy mortals who keep the world in motion. Anon, a multitude join us from the same great mass, and fill up the vacant places of their predecessors. So that, at the close of every year, the preacher's audience is nearly one half renewed. At least, a hundred persons are now present, to whose faces we were strangers but a few months ago.

These changes, it is true, are a matter of course in institutions like ours. They occasion no surprise, and often but little emotion. We witness the constant fluctuation, like the ebb and flow of ocean's tide, and we mark it not. We bid adieu to one, and salute another, with almost equal indifference. No—not always. There are moments when the kindlier sympathies of our nature dissolve the icy barriers of habit and of business, and constrain us to yield the tribute of a melting heart, as we press the hand of an ingenuous and respected brother, whom we expect to behold no more on this side the judgment-seat of Christ.

There are moments too, when memory recalls the loved idea of one and another, who once frequented these academic groves, which will cause the unconscious tear to start from the eye which shall see him no more forever. These tender recollections, which bring fresh to our view

the "soft green of the soul" on which affection delights to repose, become more and more exquisite and sadly grateful, as we travel on through this unfeeling world; and daily experience more of the ingratitude, dishonesty, duplicity, treachery, and cruelty of our fellow-men. There is a soothing melancholy in thus reverting to past scenes of friendly intercourse where the *heart* participated, which half obliterates the impressions continually made on the sensitive mind, by the cold insidious smile of selfish veteran hypocrisy, which would fain pass for sincerity and kindness. Are we forgotten by our youthful friends when dispersed the wide world over? Perhaps we are: still, let the fond delusion be cherished. The aching bosom still finds a solace in fancy's magic creations, when most that is real in public life appears odious and repulsive.

A few of us have witnessed more than one entire revolution in our little assembly. Within ten short years, hundreds have come to us, and hundreds have left us. How many, who now hear me, were here ten years ago? Of those with whom it was my happy lot first to associate within these hallowed walls, not an individual now frequents them. Pupils, teachers, companions—all are gone. The voices which, when a student, I was accustomed to hear addressing mercy's throne, and proclaiming heaven's kind messages of love, are hushed forever! No, they are tuned to purer strains—to more seraphic lays, in yonder blessed mansions. Spirits of the sainted dead! Where now are all the affectionate youth, who once listened with delight, if not with corresponding profit, to

the accents of your glowing, persuasive, commanding eloquence? How many of them are already uniting with you, in singing the praises of redeeming love in that peaceful happy country, towards which you delighted here to point them? And who, of all those that yet remain behind, can ever forget the paternal counsels and warnings, the seasonable reproofs and exhortations, the pathetic appeals and entreaties of their beloved, venerated Smith and Kollock?

Such are the changes and inroads which a few years occasion in a circle so limited as ours. What individual in this assembly shall, twenty years hence, tell his listening auditors that he alone of all their number was, at this period, a member of either of these institutions [*i.e.* the College and Theological Seminary?] and that the lips of all those who spoke of heavenly wisdom, when he first entered this hall, as a pupil or a worshipper, are silent forever? Melancholy, awful, alarming thought! Who can tell what a day may bring forth? What a call for diligence, and zeal, and watchfulness, and prayer! Can we suffer one moment more of precious time to pass unheeded or unimproved?

Brethren, it has pleased the Lord, in his great goodness, to spare our lives to behold the close of another year. It becomes us to take a solemn and an honest retrospect of our conduct during that period. Let us call to mind the many mercies received—the many privileges enjoyed—the multiplied favours of a gracious protecting providence—the many calls and warnings and judgments from the word and spirit and ministers of God—the return

which we have rendered to our heavenly Preserver and Benefactor—and the improvement which we have made of all his kindly dealings and fatherly chastisements.

Have we been prospered in all our ways? Have our health and reason, our property and friends, and all our temporal comforts and privileges been continued to us? What has been the temper of our hearts during all this year of uninterrupted enjoyment of so many precious benefits? Have they overflowed with gratitude and love and praise to the Giver of every good and perfect gift? Has the morning and the evening sacrifice borne witness daily to the sincerity of our deep convictions of obligation to our heavenly Father for his unmerited kindness and rich beneficence? If not—then, what a debt of gratitude has accumulated against us? When or how shall we repay it? What a motive to strive to redeem lost time by all possible diligence and thankfulness in future?

Have we been in danger, in trouble, in sorrow, in sickness, in affliction: and did we not secretly promise, that, if God would deliver us, we would sin no more against him? Our presence in this place to-day is proof that God did deliver us. Have we remembered his mercy and performed our vows?

How often, within the current year, have we been almost persuaded to become the disciples of the blessed Jesus? and again have hardened our hearts, and turned aside after vanity? Remember, God has said, "My spirit shall not always strive with man." "He, that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."

Has not the hand of the Lord been stretched forth in judgment among us? How many souls has he taken from the number of our acquaintances? Has not the voice of mourning been heard in our streets? Who among us has not been called to shed a tear over some deceased relative or friend since the commencement of the present year? What were our emotions and our resolutions when we contemplated the cold remains of a beloved parent or brother or sister or companion? Did not, in that awful hour of heart-rending anguish, the voice of the dead pierce our souls and bring home the warning—"Be ye also ready; watch and pray for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come?" And did we not solemnly bind our hearts to an immediate and faithful compliance?

But where now are all our resolves, and purposes, and convictions? Whither has fled that tender conscience—that susceptible heart—that kindly relenting—that heavenly aspiring—that pensive, thoughtful, sorrowing spirit, which seemed just about to soar above earth's delusive dreams, and to wing its joyful flight to kindred spirits in the skies? Has death then so suddenly lost his terrors? Has the grave concealed from our view affection's idol, only to dry up the fountains of sympathy, and to check the flow of penitential feeling, which, for a few sad moments, we suffered to take its course? How many calls like these shall we disregard? How soon may we be constrained in bitterness to exclaim, behold, "the harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved?"

"Quench not the Spirit. Grieve not the Holy Spirit

of God. To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart. Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." Boast not thyself of to-morrow:—This night thy soul may be required of thee; then, whose shall those things be which now engross thy thoughts and affections?

"By nature's law, what may be, may be now;
There's no prerogative in human hours.
In human hearts what bolder thought can rise,
Than man's presumption on to-morrow's dawn?
Where is to-morrow? In another world.
For numbers this is certain; the reverse
Is sure to none; and yet on this *perhaps*,
This *peradventure*, infamous for lies,
As on a rock of adamant we build
Our mountain hopes; spin out eternal schemes,
And big with life's futurities expire.
Be wise to-day; 'tis madness to defer;
Next day the fatal precedent will plead;
Thus on, till wisdom is pushed out of life.
Procrastination is the thief of time;
Year after year it steals, till all are fled,
And to the mercies of a moment leaves
The vast concerns of an eternal scene.
If not so frequent, would not this be strange?
That 'tis so frequent, this is stranger still."

A suggestion or two, adapted to the peculiar character and condition of the great mass of my hearers, shall conclude this discourse.

How ought *we* to improve our time?

1. It is evident, from what has been said, as well as from the very nature and end of our existence, as unfolded to us in Scripture, and confirmed by reason and

experience, that Religion ought to be our first, and last, and chief concern.

Man was made to be religious. Religion constitutes his true dignity and glory. All the peace, and comfort, and virtue, and felicity in the world, or which have ever been in the world, flow, and have flowed, from religion. Banish religion utterly from our world, and our world would be a hell. Give religion (the pure religion of Christ) the entire dominion—let it prevail universally—let it reign supremely in every heart, and prompt and regulate every action—and our world would be a heaven. But this world is neither a heaven nor a hell; because religion is neither totally excluded nor generally regarded. In proportion, however, as it does prevail, in the same proportion do we behold human nature approximating that purity and happiness which angels possess. And in proportion as it is anywhere neglected, opposed, despised—in the same degree do vice and ignorance and misery gain the ascendency. This is a fact obvious to every man's observation.

Look where you will—upon nations, or neighbourhoods, or families, or individuals—among the ancients or the moderns—whether Heathen or Jewish, Mohammedan or Christian—still, where religion has most influence, there is most excellence and most enjoyment. Not that all religions are equally good: but the worst is better than none. And the beneficial influence, which they respectively exert on human character and conduct, will, other things being equal, invariably be according to the purity and truth of the several systems embraced. Much

evil is restrained or prevented by the worst religion on earth—much more by the better—and most of all by the best.

The Christian religion, imperfectly as it has hitherto been known, and limited as has been the sphere of its direct control, has already effected such a revolution in human feelings, principles, habits and institutions, in all countries upon which its light has shone, that could an ancient Persian, or Greek, or Roman, from their respective nations when most religious, moral and prosperous, be suddenly introduced into a Christian community, he would scarcely recognize his species. It would be all a fairy land to him.

Strange, passing strange, that a historian should be an enemy to Christianity: strange that a historian and a philosopher, in the midst of a Christian land, should be an infidel—that he should talk of "the cheerful devotion," "the elegant mythology" of the pagans—of "the mild, social, tolerant spirit of polytheism"—and have the effrontery to degrade the religion of Christ below the licentious, cruel, abominable idolatries and superstitions of heathenism. And this too while surrounded by the ten thousand witnesses to the heavenly benevolence and purity of the Christian faith. One scarcely knows which most to admire, the cold-blooded cruelty, the depraved hardihood, or the stupid credulity and ignorance, which such an exhibition betrays. We trust that no youthful readers of a Hume or a Gibbon—with the Bible in their hands, inculcating principles as pure and benign as the Deity from whom they emanated, and with the monu-

ments of their meliorating tendency and transforming power everywhere in view—will ever recur to pagan Memphis or Athens or Rome, for better society and laws and usages and morals, only to pour contempt upon the faith of their fathers, and the institutions of the gospel.

This is the religion which has wrought miracles of philanthropy and mercy in our wretched world. Which is still marching onward, conquering and to conquer. Glorious are the triumphs and the trophies already won. Empires and kingdoms have done homage to the cross; and rich and multiplied have been the blessings received in return.

But this blessed religion, while it diffuses its cheering beams over nations and empires, directs its healing, life-giving energies to individuals also. And every individual has a personal and an everlasting interest in her charities. She is the arbiter of our peace and happiness in time and through eternity. She is here present this day, soliciting each one of us to enlist under her banners: assuring us that her ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths peace. She invites us to living fountains of unmingled sweetness—to imperishable mansions in the New Jerusalem—to crowns of rejoicing in the Paradise of God. But her smiles are not to be courted, at particular seasons, and on special occasions, only. She demands the whole heart—and she demands it constantly. Every moment of our lives must be consecrated to her service. She admits of no rival—of no divided dominion.

Are these terms too hard? What—to be religious every day—every hour—from youth to old age?—To be ever exercising self-denial, patience, submission, humility —to be unceasingly watchful, circumspect, devotional, prayerful, penitent? Yes, assuredly. Ah, how much need have we then to redeem the time!

Religion, I repeat, is an every-day work. Without religion, we are the enemies of God: and his curse abideth on every step we take, and on every action we perform. Now, there is probably much error prevalent on this subject. Religion is not a kind of holiday garb, to be put on and off at pleasure—to be worn at one time and laid aside at another. It is to be worn at all times —in all places—under all circumstances. The mechanic in his workshop—the farmer in his field—the merchant in his counting-house—the sailor before the mast—the magistrate upon the bench—the student at his books—may all be as religious in any of these employments, as the preacher in the pulpit, or the penitent on his knees in the closet. Religion regulates the temper, reigns in the heart, and keeps alive the spirit of devotion and love wherever we go, or whatever may be our worldly vocation.

Industry—diligence in lawful business of some kind—is a *duty* incumbent on all men, and is therefore a part of religion. An idle man cannot be a religious man; nor can he be a happy man, even were it possible for any man to be happy without being religious. Religion has a large demand on human labour and enterprise. Human wealth and human learning are the instruments which

she liberally employs to accomplish her benevolent plans and purposes in the world. And whenever these are sought for such an application, they are sought religiously. The blessing of God will accompany the labours of the hand and of the mind: and rich shall be the labourer's reward, both in this life, and in that which is to come.

2. My young friends, it has pleased God, in his gracious providence, to bring you hither to acquire knowledge. This therefore is your present business. This is your worldly vocation. And, like every other, it may be blessed or cursed to yourselves and others, according to the spirit with which it is prosecuted.

Time is the talent committed to you to improve to the very utmost of your ability, according to the opportunities and advantages enjoyed. To discipline, to strengthen, to enlighten, to enlarge the mind, that you may be qualified to appear and to shine among your ignorant uncultivated fellow-men, like stars in the firmament, where, but for them, all would be cheerless midnight darkness:—this is your object. It is a noble object, if rightly understood and appreciated.

Knowledge is power—is wealth—is honour. It raises the savage above the brute; and the peasant, in civilized society, much above the savage. While it exalts the few, who possess its richest stores, as far above the mass of the unlearned as they transcend the brute creation.

Knowledge opens the surest path to usefulness and eminence. It confers a nobility which no hereditary

rank can equal; and which kings and princes cannot bestow. Knowledge, consecrated to its legitimate end, constitutes the brightest ornament of human nature. It is, and must be, the main pillar of our republican institutions—of all civil and religious liberty—of all that the patriot and the Christian hold most dear upon earth. It is a treasure of which no adverse fortune, no persecuting power, no malignant fiend, can deprive its possessor. In poverty—in exile—at home—abroad—in the wilderness —upon the ocean—in prison—in bonds—it is his companion and his solace: and like Cicero, and Luther, and Knox, and Milton, and Locke, and Galileo, and Bacon, and a thousand others, more unfortunate and more oppressed than they, he can, even then, turn it to a profitable account. So far as this world merely is in question, it is more desirable than any or all other possessions. With what invincible persevering ardor then, ought its acquisition to be prosecuted by every ingenuous youth, who aspires to the perfection of his nature, and to the most commanding sphere of human action?

Now is your time to lay up treasures of knowledge —*now*, perhaps, or never. Now you commence your labours in that exhaustless mine, which will afford you employment and delight through the longest life: or you set the seal to your own voluntary degradation and insignificance while you live. Here you will carefully and diligently lay that solid and broad foundation, upon which, the loftiest superstructure may be raised by future industry: or you will trifle away the precious moments till you despair of being able to redeem them;

and then mingle with the common herd of the idle, the abandoned, and the worthless—the objects of the pity, the contempt, and the scorn of mankind.

"Facilis descensus Averni." Have any of you begun to slide—begun to relax—to grow indolent—to be discouraged—to be seduced by pleasure? Let the new year be a new era in your academical career, and in your life. Redeem the time, and have the courage to be wise; let fools and witlings say what they will. A month, honestly and assiduously devoted to duty, will teach you to commiserate or to despise them all. It will teach you to despise and to abhor the course which you have hitherto pursued. Make the trial then in the name and strength of the Lord,—and victory is yours.

Do any of you ask, what species of knowledge is worthy of cultivation? I answer, every kind. Youth often err greatly on this point. They sometimes undertake to pronounce, with perfect assurance, on the utility or inutility of a particular branch of science which happens to form a part of their prescribed course. They persuade themselves, or suffer themselves to be persuaded by others not more competent to decide, that this or that difficult study will be of no use to them, and therefore they neglect it; or that they have no talent for it, and hence refuse to make the trial. This they do, not only in opposition to the opinion of those who are older and wiser; but while they themselves are totally ignorant of the subject on which they sit in judgment. They compliment their own superior sagacity, perhaps, in thus getting rid of a piece of drudgery; while, in truth, they

are only indulging a spirit of idleness and presumption, which is equally hostile to all improvement.

But independently of all such juvenile prejudices—and of all the pedantry, and of all the ill-timed and ill-digested systems of education in the world—I maintain the proposition, in all its length and breadth, that every species of liberal knowledge, every department of science and literature is worthy of attention, whenever and wherever it can be consistently cultivated. No man ever denounces as useless any science or language with which he is himself acquainted. Only the ignorant condemn: and they condemn what they do not understand, and because they do not understand it.

No youth can foresee what will be useful to him, or what will not, in all the possible situations and circumstances of future life. The very thing that he least values, may be the means of gaining an honest livelihood, in a place and at a time, when no other branch of knowledge would answer the same purpose. A modest deference therefore to the judgment of those whose province it is to direct his studies, ought to lead him to master all that they are able or willing to impart: and his own interest should prompt him to the attainment of as much more as time and means will permit.

Apart however from the specific consideration just hinted at, there is a positive benefit to be derived from every attainment which can be made, (if we are disposed to employ our knowledge for any good end,) whatever may be our profession or station in life. Of all the learned men who have ever adorned and blessed our world by their

labours, who, let me ask, have been most distinguished, most successful, most useful? Precisely those who have put under contribution, to the greatest extent, every corner and recess of the grand temple of science, which it was possible for them to explore. There is such an intimate connection between the sciences; such a perfect harmony of parts in the great whole of human knowledge; that all may frequently, like the rays of the sun, be brought to bear intensely on a single point; or, at pleasure, be spread over an immense surface, diffusing light and heat and joy to the utmost verge of civilized society.

But, in an academical course, one important, and the most important object aimed at, besides the future advantage to be expected from any particular acquisition, is the discipline of the youthful mind. To render it vigorous, and liberal, and active—to quicken and sharpen its faculties—to unfold its latent energies—to inspire it with the love of knowledge—to imbue it with so much of its elementary principles, as will serve to enlarge its field of vision, and discover its peculiar bias and appropriate sphere—to give it the habit of thorough investigation—and thus prepare it to pursue its march to professional eminence, when cast upon its own resources, and left without a guide to its own efforts. Here, then, you are to learn *how* to study; and to acquire enough of mental furniture to set out in life for yourselves.

I have not intended to affirm, that, any man can learn everything that is knowable. The age of a Methuselah would not suffice for this. Nor is it necessary, in order

to become possessed of all the *science* in the world, to read a hundredth part of the books which have been written and published. The reading of books, and the acquisition of real knowledge, are frequently two very different things. But youth can learn at college all that they are required to learn there—and a great deal more. Afterwards, when one great object or vocation shall mainly engage their attention, they can gather many beautiful flowers and much precious fruit from the adjacent fields, if they have a taste for them, and know how to make the best use of their time and opportunities. And this they will do, and continue to do while they live, provided they be early put upon the right track.

Much—everything—will depend on the intellectual training to which you now submit. Study then to improve all your time in the most profitable manner. Let your amusements be rational, virtuous, seasonable, manly, and invigorating to body and mind. Let knowledge be sought wherever it can be found. Let order, and method, and system be adopted and rigorously maintained. Study hard while you profess to study. Relax at suitable intervals, only to return with redoubled ardour to your books. Thus health, serenity of mind, elasticity of spirits, present enjoyment, and future usefulness and honour will all be promoted and secured.

3. Finally. There is one species of knowledge about the importance of which we hear a great deal, and read a great deal:—A knowledge of the world. And this

knowledge, it is taken for granted, can be acquired only by mingling with the world, and contemplating men and manners as they are. "The proper study of mankind is man." Here again, human philosophy and poetry lead us astray.

It is in the Bible, and nowhere else, that we learn the genuine character and the true history of man. We may travel the world over, visit every clime and every city, mix with every society and circle, converse with the savage and the philosopher, the prince and the beggar, and still be ignorant of human nature. The heathen sages, who travelled most, and studied most, and thought and speculated most on this subject, have told us nothing of the matter. They never could comprehend the mystery—man.

The Bible, and the Bible only, tells us all about him. And the hermit of the wilderness, with the Bible in his hands, may, if he please, know more of himself and of his species, than Socrates, or Plato, or Tully ever knew. More than any modern philosopher or politician, however learned or however travelled, who neglects the Bible, will ever discover.

In the Bible we behold man as he is—stripped of all his trappings and disguises. His heart is there laid open to our inspection. We see all the hidden springs and motives of his actions. We follow him through all the windings of his course—into all the dark coverts, and corners, and recesses, to which guilt and crime retreat from human eyes. We fairly estimate his character. Such a view of human nature is presented nowhere else.

No uninspired historian, or biographer, or moralist, has ever given us an exact—perfect representation of a single individual. Nor can we ascertain the true character of any one of our most intimate companions, or even of ourselves, except through the medium and by the aid of that light which is reflected from the Bible upon all who faithfully study its illuminating pages.

For this single end therefore, were there no other, or were not this paramount to all others, or did it not fairly embrace everything else, the Bible is infinitely important to a student, desirous of every liberal accomplishment. Here he may acquire a just and adequate knowledge of the world, as it ever has been—is now—and ever will be. Let the Bible then be your constant companion.*

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* The Bible has, for ten years past, been a class-book in the college. It is studied and recited on the Sabbath. It was introduced by the late venerable President. Whose constant practice it was, after questioning the students upon the portion prepared, to explain the difficult passages, to unfold the import and spirit of the whole in the most catholic manner, and to enforce upon the heart and conscience such practical truths and lessons as were likely to prove most beneficial to his pupils. The good effects of this system have been abundantly visible. Much precious fruit has already been the result. But the half will not be known to him, who here delighted in this work of love, till long after he shall be gathered to his fathers. In heaven, we trust, he will hereafter see welcomed to the mansions of peace, many, of whom he had little hope while patiently and prayerfully engaged in sowing the gospel seed, who will tell him that the study of the Bible at Nassau-Hall had been the means, under God, of leading them to the Saviour and to glory.

It is hoped that this laudable usage will be maintained by all who may yet succeed to the Presidential chair; and that the Bible will never cease to form an essential part of the classical studies of the College of New Jersey.

The Bible—in naming this precious book, I name the richest treasure ever bestowed by heaven on man. The Bible—inestimable, inexhaustible fountain of truth, and wisdom, and purity, and consolation! But time will not permit even a glance at a thousandth part of the advantages and blessings which it proffers and promises to all who diligently and prayerfully study it. It will be a lamp to your feet, and a light to your path, and a joy to your hearts, in all your wanderings through life's checkered scenery, and through death's dark valley. It will teach you how to value, and how to improve time—how to be learned—how to be honest—how to be religious—how to be useful—how to be happy—how to live—and how to die.

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Search the Holy Scriptures therefore, which are able to make you wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

And, as you are about to commence a new year, my friends,—commence a new life also. And may God in mercy enable you to do so—and to devote the remainder of your lives entirely to his service and glory! Then, indeed, we shall have solid grounds to greet you, and to wish you a happy new-year. For, such you will find it in reality, and as such you will remember it through eternity. Amen!

PLEASING GOD RATHER THAN MEN.

[CHAPEL OF COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY, AUGUST 15, 1824.]

PLEASING GOD RATHER THAN MEN.

[A FAREWELL SERMON AT PRINCETON.*]

For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.
(*Galatians*, i. 10.)

The Apostle, after having twice pronounced them accursed who should preach any other gospel than that which he had already preached, proceeds in the text to repel the calumnies of the false judaizing teachers, who had represented him to the Galatians as one that suited his doctrines to the inclinations of his hearers. He exposes both the absurdity and the malignity of the accusation: and with conscious integrity maintains, that, his supreme desire and single aim was to please God, without any undue regard, either to the praise or censure of men. Previously to his conversion to the Christian faith, he had been, as he himself acknowledges, an active, bigoted, intolerant party-zealot; a pharisee of the strictest sect; a determined, inveterate opposer and persecutor of the followers of Christ. He was now the reverse. He gloried in the cross which he once despised. Though last called to the apostolic office, yet he was ever first in labours, first in dangers, and first in sufferings.

His character rises so far above the ordinary standard

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* Delivered in the chapel of the College of New Jersey, August 15, 1824.

of human excellence that he has deservedly become the object of a world's admiration, however unjust to him while living. Yet, notwithstanding his great and decided superiority to most other men, he was humble to the lowest step of abasement and condescension: none ever thinking better of others, or more meanly of himself. He viewed himself as the least of the apostles; not meet to be called an apostle; as less than the least of the saints; nay, as the very chief of sinners. As a debtor to all men, and bound for Christ's sake, to risk his life in their service. Such were the honesty and the magnanimity of that man of God, whom, mercenary intruders into the sacred office, dared to calumniate and to slander.

1. The primary object, therefore, of the apostle in the text and context, doubtless was, to defend himself and fellow-labourers in the ministry, against the illiberal and unfounded abuse of the enemies of truth.

2. This, and similar declarations of the apostle, in another epistle, have been left on record for the instruction and direction of all preachers of the gospel: and particularly for the reproof of such as make it their chief aim to gain the applause of men.

3. And, to teach us all the duty of studying to please God; to honour and obey his holy law, steadily, cheerfully, and perseveringly, instead of yielding to the follies, the humours and the opinions of ungodly men.

Agreeably to the latter and more extensive application of the text, I purpose to submit to your consideration a few remarks on the great principle of human conduct

recommended by this distinguished apostle. "For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ."

The doctrine of the text may be comprised in this single proposition, viz.:

Those persons, who make it their principal aim and study to please their fellow-men, cannot be the sincere disciples or servants of Christ.

In order to illustrate this proposition in the most practical manner, let us

I. Take a cursory view of the character of those who are actuated by a steady desire to please God: and notice some of the distinguishing features of this character. And then—

II. Contemplate the converse of the proposition, or consider the character of those whose great ambition it is to please men: that, by a candid comparison of the one with the other, we may distinctly perceive the justness and propriety of the apostle's declaration in the text.

I. The duty to obey God in all things, and the character of those who conscientiously perform it.

Our obligation to love and to obey God, will not be questioned, it is presumed, by any who do not deny his existence. It is no less a dictate of reason than a command of revelation. The manner in which this love is to be exercised, and this obedience to be rendered, is explained in the Bible. Here we are taught the whole of what God requires of man. In this sacred book, and nowhere else, we discover the true standard, and the unerring rule of life. And our duty is, in

everything we undertake, to ascertain whether, in its progress and issue, we shall please God.—Whether we shall act agreeably to the precepts given us in his word. If not, we must forbear, let the consequences be what they may. God's will must be paramount to every other. He must reign supreme or not at all.

In making this broad statement, I do not mean to say or to insinuate that the judgment of our fellow-men is to be altogether disregarded, or even lightly esteemed; but that we are to value it, and to yield to it, only so far as it may comport with the revealed will of God. The approbation of men is, on many accounts, desirable. And if it can be acquired without a sacrifice of our duty to God, or while in the conscientious discharge of that duty, it is well. But if it cannot be acquired on these terms, we may content ourselves by reflecting that we ought to obey God rather than man. "My friends," said the Saviour to his disciples, "be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: fear him, which, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him."

The desire of pleasing God must be constant and universal. Its influence must extend not only to actions and to words, but to the purposes and wishes of the soul. For all these, God will bring us to judgment. He will expose to light the hidden works of darkness. Every secret sin, every proud, selfish desire, every attempt to evade the rigour of his law, by a partial or hypocritical observance of its precepts, every deviation from

the straight line of duty, every compliance with the maxims and fashions of a corrupt world to the dishonouring of Christ, will, if not washed away in atoning blood, be required at our hands in the day when God shall judge the world in righteousness, and award to every man sentence according to the deeds done in the body. There is, therefore, but one course which can be safely and consistently taken; and that is the high-way of duty, which leads directly to Heaven and to God. "For if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

Having thus generally illustrated the principle inculcated in our text, we proceed to notice some of the beneficial effects which are likely to result from it: or some of the most striking features which mark the character of the man who is habitually actuated by it.

1. DECISION.—The man whose steady aim is to please God, will be a decided man; because he will have one great and definite object constantly in view. All those grounds of hesitation and suspense, by which the mass of mankind are perplexed and retarded in their schemes and operations, will be removed. His heart is fixed. He has deliberately made his election and formed his purpose. He has come out from the world, and boldly enlisted under the banners of the King of Heaven. VICTORY OR DEATH, I was going to say, is his motto—but of victory he is sure. From the moment that the apostle, on whose words we are commenting, exclaimed, on his way to Damascus, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" his resolution was taken. Not to be great, but to

be good. Not to command, but to obey. Not to seize upon a favourable crisis to advance his fortune or his fame, but to count all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord. He instantly submitted, without consulting with flesh and blood. He humbly sought the divine direction, and when obtained, he persevered, without ever once listening to the suggestions of worldly interest or worldly policy, till he gained the crown of martyrdom, and was honoured with the brightest crown in his Master's kingdom. Perhaps the history of the world does not furnish a happier instance of decision of character, in its highest degree and purest form, than was exhibited in the life and labours of the apostle Paul.

This is a quality, indeed, which we always admire; whether displayed amidst the dazzling splendour of martial exploits, or in the bold discharge of painful, disinterested and benevolent duties. We admire it in wicked men sometimes as well as in good. In Cæsar, when passing the Rubicon, and trampling on the liberties of his country; and in Luther, when contending for the truth against Christendom in arms. In Pizarro, while deluging an empire with the blood of the innocent; and in Howard, while traversing a continent in search of the wretched objects of his boundless philanthropy. We admire it in the hero and the warrior, as well as in the self-denied and devoted missionary of the cross. In Cromwell and in Nelson, as in Whitefield and in Martyn. But how different the objects at which these severally aimed; how different the motives by which they were

influenced; and how different the estimate which the sober Christian will make of their respective characters!

But this admired quality may exist and flourish in thousands on whom the public eye never fastens. The great mass of mankind live and die in the vale of obscurity, unknowing and unknown, except in the contracted sphere of their own immediate neighbourhood. But on these the Sun of righteousness may beam with all his radiant splendours. He may kindle in the heart a flame, pure and steady, which no dark cloud can obscure—no tempest extinguish. Here may be called into exercise, and here may be put to the proof, all the virtues which can adorn humanity, though the tongue of eulogy may never pronounce their praise. Though their names may not appear on the page of story, or in the annals of martyrdom, yet they may be truly great and good, and as resolute and decided in their Master's cause as those who have laid down their lives in his defence.

Here then, among genuine Christians, however humble or however exalted, are we to look for the operation and the fruits of this ennobling principle. They have occasion for it every moment of their lives. Without it, they cannot maintain their ground against the most insidious and formidable enemies by whom they are constantly surrounded, and who are ever watching an opportunity for a favourable attack. Did they halt between two opinions; did they hesitate whom to serve, Jehovah or Baal; or did they attempt to serve two masters, God and Mammon; or to reconcile religion with conformity to the world, they would be undone. They would mani-

fest a weakness and an indecision wholly unworthy of a Christian soldier, and wholly incompatible with the sublime object for which he professes to be contending.

In mere men of the world, great decision of character very frequently approximates to obstinacy and to an over-weening confidence in their own judgment. In such it is as likely to operate to the disadvantage and defeat of their own favourite views and measures, as to their success—to their disgrace as to their credit. As was the case with Charles XII. of Sweden, and with Louis XIV. of France.

It is oftentimes, too, associated with other lofty traits, or qualities, or virtues, especially courage and magnanimity, which conspire to shed a lustre about a character, and a course of conduct, which every moral and religious principle forbids us to approve. Such is the fact in regard to the great mass of heroes as presented to us in history or in fiction. A daring, invincible, persevering energy of soul, displayed in the most trying situations, imparts a seductive and pernicious dignity even to the most selfish, most ambitious, most arbitrary and unprincipled scourges of mankind. Satan himself, as portrayed by Milton's graphic pencil, commands, by his bold decision in the midst of ruin and horror and despair, a portion of admiration—and, I may add, extorts the sympathy of the feeling reader.

But the firmness, courage and decision of the Christian hero differ in *kind* as well as in *degree* from these qualities in other men, because they are of heavenly

origin. In him it is not a mere constitutional hardihood or intrepidity which resists and overcomes all opposition when inflamed or impelled by some base predominant passion. It is a strength and resolution—an inflexible determination of mind to persevere, which is the product of grace—the gift of God—and which is essential to his comfort and well-being. He is not urged forward by the ambition of power or fame, but constrained by the love of God, as the ruling passion of his soul, to encounter every danger and difficulty in the pursuit of the noblest object which can be presented to the enterprise of an intelligent and immortal being. Such was Paul. And such, in a measure, is every honest, faithful Christian, whatever may be his standing or circumstances in the world.

2. Consistency.—The next valuable property or trait which we shall notice as distinguishing the man who studies in all things to please God, is consistency of character and conduct. This, too, is an excellence of the highest order: and although it may be found in some men who are destitute of religious principle, and who are acting, what the world esteem, an honourable part in life; and in multitudes of grossly wicked men who are sufficiently uniform and consistent in their wickedness; yet we think it can be predicated of none with so much propriety and emphasis as of the sincere Christian.

No man can be uniformly decided and consistent unless he have some one great object steadily in view, on which all his affections centre, and towards which all his aims and efforts are directed. This object must absorb his

whole soul. It must call into vigorous exercise, and direct and control all the energies and faculties of his being. Now to the Christian, God is such an object. His eye is constantly directed to God—his heart flows out in love to God—and his every desire and purpose and endeavour is to please God. The world—its fashions, opinions, pursuits, are all fickle and changeable. But God is immutable. His law is immutable. The same things which pleased him yesterday, continue to please him to-day, and will please him to-morrow and forever. Consequently, in serving him habitually and faithfully, we shall pursue one direct, unvarying course through life. And every aberration from it will arise from our not conforming strictly to the rule which we profess to have adopted, and not from any change or inconsistency in the rule itself. The moment we sincerely resolve to be the Lord's, and his only, our character is established. It has assumed a permanent tone and form and complexion. It afterwards undergoes no essential alteration, although we are continually advancing in holiness, and shall be so, till death be swallowed up in victory, and we be crowned with that perfect image of our Maker of which sin has robbed us. But were we anxious to please ungodly men, who differ not only from one another, but, at times, even from themselves; who are unreasonable, capricious, and unstable, we could never expect to obtain, or, at least, to preserve their favour, without the basest compliances and the most disgraceful inconsistencies. Our character, therefore, would be perpetually changing, or rather we should have no character at all.

True it is, there are many who are styled Christians, and who intend to pass for Christians, who make it their daily study so to conduct as to keep in favour both with believers and unbelievers. When a man of this description is summoned to the performance of any duty, he first inquires how much of it he may omit, or how much of it he must perform, and in what way, so as not to en danger his reputation, or hurt his interest, or prevent his rising in the world. His main object is, so to manage matters, or so to play his card (to use a phrase sufficiently dignified for the chameleon-like character under consideration) as most effectually to promote his own designs; maintain the form and appearance of religion; preserve the confidence and friendship of his neighbours; and yet be suspected, neither of superstitious weakness on the one hand, nor of an undue compliance with the world, on the other. He is anxious not to be thought righteous overmuch by one class, and yet to appear sufficiently religious before another. Such a man God abhors. And such a man, after all, frequently fails to reap the despicable harvest which he so ardently covets and so dishonestly seeks.

The man who is truly devoted to God, who esteems his service a most reasonable service, as every real Christian certainly does, will be free from that spirit of murmuring and cavilling against the divine law as being too strict and severe, which is so peculiar to the world, and which is often manifested by those who fain would be considered as separated from the world. Like David, when restored to the divine favour, after a most grievous

fall, he will have respect to all the commandments of God. He will be as conscientious and faithful in secret, when no man is the witness of his actions, as in public, when the eyes of the world are upon him. And in this respect he differs from all the world. In this respect he differs essentially from the hypocrite whose chief desire is to be seen and admired of men; and who, of course, is under no restraint when unobserved. Now every man, at all acquainted with the Christian warfare, will readily concur in the opinion that this is at once a very rare and a very great acquisition. Every man who is conversant with his own heart will instantly acknowledge the extreme difficulty of yielding an unreserved submission and an unqualified approbation to a law which condemns as defective his most earnest endeavours to obey it. But difficult and rare as the attainment truly is, yet it is possessed by every child of God. Such is the victory which he has gained over the corruptions of his nature, that the law of God is his delight. He approves its restraints, its demands and its penalties. He would not have it less strict and less holy, were it in his power to make it so. He can adopt the fervent language of the devout psalmist, and, with his whole heart, exclaim—"Righteous art thou, O Lord, and upright are thy judgments. Thy testimonies that thou hast commanded are righteous and very faithful. I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways. I will delight myself in thy statutes; I will not forget thy word. Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law. Thy testimonies also are my delight, and

my counsellors. Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes, and I shall keep it unto the end. Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart."

3. CONTENTMENT.—The man, who possesses the spirit of the apostle as manifested in our text, is satisfied with his condition in the world, because God has allotted it to him. Whether his station be high or low, whether he be rich or poor, gives him no distressing concern, because he perfectly knows that on earth he has no continuing city, and that his future welfare depends not on his external circumstances here. With David he can say—"In God have I put my trust; I will not be afraid what man can do unto me." With Paul he believes, that "Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out."

While other men hazard soul and body for the vain distinctions of this passing world, he enjoys more than the world can give, and what neither death nor hell can take from him. While they are wandering in the desert, and groping in the dark, after they know not what, he is carefully, though unperceived, laying up a treasure in heaven, which shall be to him an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. He is making sure of the true riches—the pearl of great price—whose lustre shall be untarnished, and whose value undiminished, when all the splendour and all the wealth of this world shall have perished forever. He is seeking, not the honour and the favour of mortals, who, to-morrow

may forsake him or have nothing to bestow; but the favour and the honour of God, whose friendship is unchangeable and eternal. For whom God loveth, he loveth unto the end.

This was the source of that solid peace of mind which the great apostle of the Gentiles, in the midst of the severest trials and conflicts, so pre-eminently enjoyed. And I apprehend that real contentment can be derived from no other source. Men have exercised all their ingenuity in speculation, and all their skill in experiment, on the all-important subject of human happiness: and, I suppose, it will be conceded that their plans and experiments have, without one exception, proved delusive and unsatisfactory. It is foreign to my present purpose to enter into a minute discussion of this commonplace topic, of highest moment indeed to every human being, and which has exhausted the resources and the wit of the most capacious and exalted human intellect; but which still continues to be overshadowed by clouds and darkness—and impervious to the keenest powers of mere human vision.

If happiness were within the reach of mortal grasp, we may rest assured that the envied jewel would long since have been the property of some fortunate adventurer. The unremitting efforts and researches of hundreds of millions of men, during a period of six thousand years, would have been crowned with success; were the object within the scope of human enterprise and of human power. But this world still remains, to all its votaries and admirers, a vale of sorrow and discontent, of misery

and disappointment. No matter what the sphere in which they move—no matter how exalted the stations which they occupy—no matter how much of the world they may claim as their own—still bitterness is in their cup; their days are few and evil; vanity and emptiness are written on all their possessions, and contentment is a stranger to their bosoms.

The Book of God alone unfolds a brighter prospect, and scatters light in the path of the hapless wanderer. It is only in the service of the God of heaven that any portion of pure felicity can be realized. In support of this position we might produce the testimony of both the wicked and the good in every age. For even the enemies of religion are constrained sometimes to do her homage; and while they feel the vanity of the objects which they most ardently coveted, and of the pursuits in which they most eagerly engaged, they almost unconsciously sigh for the supporting energy and consoling balm of this despised, rejected, ridiculed system of heavenly grace and wisdom, through which life and immortality have been brought to light. And which, in spite of all their artifice and sophistry, brings at times conviction most painfully home to their hearts. An awful uncertainty and dread of the future are ever haunting the minds of those who are not prepared to meet it. And I doubt not that Voltaire himself, and all those who, like Voltaire, have most deliberately and openly bid defiance to the power of the Eternal, by trampling on his laws and by scorning the provisions of his grace, would, if their voice could be heard from the world of spirits, con-

fess that they never knew what it was to be happy. Much less can we suppose them to be happy, who, while they half believe the truth, yet do never heartily embrace it and conform their lives to it. Theirs is a state of perpetual alarm and misgiving. To-day they resolve to reform and to seek the one thing needful: to-morrow the world seduces them from their purpose, and leads them still further astray: again they feel the remonstrances and the checks of conscience, and again determine to pursue a wiser and a safer course: but the good work is once more deferred to a more convenient season. They daily sin against light and knowledge: they do violence to their own convictions and wishes: and as they live without peace, so they commonly die without hope. Happy are those, and those only, who make it their constant study and their chief delight to please God. Theirs is the heavenly boon which kings and heroes and sages have sought and sighed for in vain. And though infinitely beyond the power of this world to bestow, it may be possessed by all without money and without price. My friends, would you be happy? God only can make you so. In his favour is life, and his loving kindness is better than life. In his presence is fulness of joy; at his right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

4. Charity.—A holy sympathy with the condition, character and welfare—with the feelings, sufferings, joys and sorrows of his fellow-men, will prompt and distinguish all his words, measures and actions.

Supreme love to God—the loving of our neighbour as ourselves—the forgiveness of our enemies—the rendering

of good for evil—the doing to others as we would have them do unto us—what a heavenly principle is this? What a delightful system of human conduct does it not inspire and enforce? Charity! precious, blessed, peace-speaking charity, on whom is thy celestial influence shed—even in these days of liberal and beneficent enterprises? Yes, I demand, even in these days of Bible, Tract, Education and Missionary Societies, who is it that breathes the pure spirit of that charity which "seeketh not her own, which vaunteth not itself, and is not puffed up?"

It is obvious that the giving of money to any object, however meritorious and important, is not an infallible evidence of charity: although the withholding of it may sufficiently indicate its total absence from the heart. But men may build churches, endow colleges and theological seminaries, bestow thousands on religious and benevolent institutions; yea, bestow all their goods to feed the poor, and give their bodies to be burned, and yet be utterly destitute of charity. Even in those ages of Christendom which we denominate the darkest and the most superstitious, a thousand-fold more of worldly property was actually consecrated to religion than is contributed by the enlightened, liberal, zealous, wealthy, ostentatious Christians of the present day. Then it was that almost all of those noble literary and religious establishments, which now constitute the chief ornament and glory of Europe, were founded and permanently endowed. If charity were to be measured by the amount of pecuniary donations and alms-giving, then I affirm that Roman Catholic Europe, before the fifteenth century, had exhibited more of

it in a given period, than the Protestant world can boast of in any similar period since. The rich may, of their abundance, cast much into the Lord's treasury, and yet be comparatively sordid and illiberal, as Scripture and daily experience very clearly prove. Nay, many a poor widow, and many a despised slave, actually give more to charitable objects than do multitudes of those whose very profession is reputed to have charity for its basis.

There is a fashion too in giving, as in all other things. Many give to an object that is popular who would otherwise give nothing. It is their own interest, character, and influence that they have in view to promote by their seeming liberality. Their station in society demands of them a small contribution occasionally, and this they cannot refuse from a fear of becoming unpopular. They will, therefore, put down their names on a subscription list which is to be published to the world, while they would not bestow a sixpence where they could get no credit for it from their fellow-men. Regardless alike of the command of the Saviour, and of the eye of Him who seeth in secret, who looketh to the heart, and who will judge of the motive.

St. Paul has told us what charity is, in the thirteenth chapter of his First Epistle to the Corinthians. And his own life was a happy comment and illustration of the doctrine which he inculcated. He sought not his own. He loved the souls of perishing immortals: and for these, like his divine Master, he laboured and suffered and died. Riches and honours and thrones and diadems were beneath his ambition and his regard. He was

willing to labour for the benefit of others in the field assigned to him, without one selfish purpose or desire in reference to his own personal comfort or worldly advantage. And sure I am, that, if this were not indisputably the fact, he would sink in our estimation.

As a herald of salvation, a man must be, and appear to be, above the world, and indifferent to its smiles and frowns, or he ceases to occupy that lofty eminence which commands respect, and which will command respect even from the most abandoned. That minister of the gospel who pursues his worldly interest with the same avidity as other men do, can never be regarded as fairly enlisted in, or honestly devoted to, the sacred cause which he professionally espouses. Hence, in those countries where great ecclesiastical distinctions and princely revenues are attainable by the clergy, they are frequently sought with the same views, and by the same kind of management, with which the secular honours of the State, the army and the navy are coveted and acquired. Christian charity has no concern in the affair. Nor do the *wise* men of the world consider the ministerial office in any other light than as an honourable and lucrative profession to live by. And the *great* men often look to the church as furnishing a convenient provision for their hopeful and graceless younger sons, on whom they can confer neither titles, nor fortunes, nor genius, nor learning. A pagan nobleman once offered to turn Christian, provided he should be made bishop of Rome. Doubtless, many conversions have originated from a similar motive—and many a high place in the Christian syna-

gogue been reached by equally disinterested and devoted men.

In our semi-barbarous Republic, to adopt the style of European courtesy towards us, the case is widely different; and therefore the enormous abuse to which I have adverted need not be apprehended. Still, something of the same spirit may possibly actuate a portion of our clergy; and much of the same sentiment in regard to them does certainly prevail among our people. And while we have on record the cases of Judas and Simon Magus, we may rest assured that men may be found base enough, even for a few paltry dollars, to assume the name and garb of Heaven's ambassadors. Here is, at least, sufficient ground for the most serious concern: and for the most rigid and impartial scrutiny into the dark recesses of our own hearts, by all who preach or intend to preach the gospel of charity to a ruined world.

The enmity and the prejudices of men are already deeply rooted and inveterate against our profession. Let us beware how we provoke and increase this hostility. We have no powerful secular arm—no military legions to flee to for protection and defence. We are not even recognized by our constitution, government, or laws. We exist by sufferance—and are literally put upon our good behaviour. All this, perhaps, is as it should be. It is best that we should be dependent on the good-will and voluntary contributions of the people. This, to be sure, is a novel state of things, and without a parallel in the history of nations. It

is therefore anxiously and justly regarded as a great experiment—the success of which our European friends and foes do exceedingly question. That it will succeed I have no doubt. But, then, our clergy must be doubly circumspect, prudent and faithful. They must be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. Holy charity must throw around them her snowy mantle, and continually urge them on to deeds of love and kindness. This will prove their best defence—their surest panoply—and will cause to fall harmless at their feet many an envenomed shaft. It will protect them from the blind rage of the brutal savage—and the more malignant attacks of civilized power and rank.

That man who is devoted to the well-being of others—who goes about doing good—whose every action betokens benevolence—who is the enemy of none, and the friend of all—is safe the wide world over. He cannot be despised. He will not often be hated. Such, at least, is the present state of the world, that now he has nothing to fear. He may traverse our western wilds—or encamp with the African in his native deserts—or proclaim salvation on the banks of the Ganges—or take up his abode among the cannibals of the South Sea Islands—and, with charity in his heart, and beaming from his eyes, and speaking in his actions, he lives and labours unharmed. Not everywhere, it is true. For although Greek, Jew, and Barbarian—Hindoo, Pagan and Mohammedan will hear, or not oppose; yet Christians dread and persecute the messenger of peace. Yes, among Christians, where slavery has steeled the heart against every

Christian principle, the lamb has been rent in pieces as though he had been a tiger. But the blood of the martyred missionary will not be silent. Demerara shall yet hear his voice, in accents of terror, when her power to avenge shall have passed away forever.

"Charity is not easily provoked—thinketh no evil—rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth—beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things; suffereth long, and is kind." When shall it be said of Christians, and of Christian ministers—behold, these brethren, how they love one another! Whenever this happy period arrives, the world will soon be Christianized. The conduct of Christians will then preach in a manner too powerful to be resisted. The ten thousand practical heresies, which every day meet the eye and escape without ecclesiastical censure, will then cease to be a stumbling-block in the way of the jealous and unfriendly spectator. The question will not be exclusively about an orthodox creed—however essential that may be—orthodox conduct (if I may be allowed such an application of the term) will be the grand test of Christian principle. The tree will be known by its fruits. And that man who does not live and act agreeably to the spirit and dictates of gospel charity, so far as this can be ascertained, will not be deemed a Christian. However earnestly he may contend for the faith—however precise and punctilious may be his attention to all visible outward observances and ceremonies—however smooth, polite and dignified may be his deportment—however much of friendship and good-will to others he

may profess with his lips—however many ecclesiastical, literary, or academical titles, honours or rewards, may crown his apparently happy lot—however long, fervent, or elegant may be his prayers—however ready to speak, on all occasions, in behalf of religion, truth and humanity—however humble and modest a countenance and demeanour he may exhibit, or however zealous, austere, self-denied, devout, and dead to all earthly distinctions he may appear to superficial observers—he may be all this, and vastly more, and yet be as destitute of charity as Judas Iscariot, or Saul of Tarsus while "breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord."

The Scribes and Pharisees were eminent in all these respects. They had all that beautiful, immaculate, solemn, imposing exterior which generally deceives the world, and yet had no more charity than the Devil their master. It is exactly such men that the world often love and honour now. Their object is to gain the world—and they do gain it—and, verily, they have their reward in it. How absurd is it for such honourable rabbies to talk of being persecuted, merely because they read in the Bible that good men will be persecuted—hence inferring, that being very good Christians, they must necessarily be the objects of the world's hatred. Whereas, if persecution, hatred, opposition must await the Christian, they ought to have decided by this criterion that they are no Christians at all. Nay, they are the very men most apt to persecute others, as the history of the church can amply demonstrate. Were our Saviour himself to ap-

pear, and to act among them and their admirers, wherever they are to be found, just as he did among their predecessors in Judea eighteen hundred years ago, he would be denounced as irreligious — as a Sabbath-breaker—as making void the law—as a blasphemer —as a friend of publicans and sinners—and, no doubt, the people would be as ready to crucify him, and many a proud dignitary to say, Amen!

Nothing is more common among these self-righteous and self-sufficient Pharisees, than, first to injure and oppress the real children of God, and then to complain of injury from them, that by slander they may vindicate their oppression. "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore, it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works."

There is a species of artful prudence, or low cunning, which some men possess, and by which they are enabled to effect prodigies in this little world of ours. Without talent, learning or piety, they contrive to get a reputation for them all. They look wise—and say little, until they see where their own interest lies. They never originate, or take the lead in any great plan or enterprise. But, when they are well convinced that such plan or enterprise will succeed—that it is becoming popular—then they will step forward in its favour—help it along—and, if possible, put themselves at the head of it—and some-

times secure to themselves the whole credit of the design and the execution.

They appear very learned, though they never look into books. Whatever they chance to hear, however, about books and subjects, they take care to display, at the proper time, and in such a way as to leave the impression that they have really trimmed the midnight lamp, though they may never have had fifty volumes at their command. They are very charitable too, because they commend every charitable institution, and statedly contribute their dollar to its funds, though they would have lived and died without doing the one or the other, but for the reason already assigned. They oppose nobody, until they are sure he will be put down: and they befriend nobody until they know he will rise without their aid.

Of friendship they are incapable. They are wholly wrapped up in self—a great mass of ice which the sun himself cannot melt. They sympathize with nobody. Neither poverty, nor sorrow, nor sickness, nor death in those around them, can ruffle a feature of their iron countenances, or touch a chord of their stony hearts. Their self-complacency is most admirable. And, yet, with all this seeming stoicism, they can stoop to the lowest abasement of sycophancy to win the smiles of the rich and powerful. They float along upon the surface of a smooth summer's sea—take whatever the world will give them—and are ever on the watch for some little morsel to increase their stock of *comfortables*. They are called *prudent* by this very charitable, discriminating

world: and, when possessed of the usual honours and perquisites, they are hailed as wise, and great, and happy.

Happy the age in which we live—happy the Church of Christ—thrice happy my country—if there be no ground in truth and fact, for any of these sketches, allusions, or remarks. I would not willingly conjure up the ghosts of other days, merely to serve the uncharitable purpose of satirising or criminating the men or the doings of the present. Happy, I repeat, if there be no cause for it. And God forgive me, if in word or feeling, I have wounded the spirit of sacred charity. "Physician, heal thyself," ought to be the standing monitor to all who venture to denounce, condemn or censure others. It is easier to preach than to practice, to advise than to execute, to talk than to act. May Heaven grant us all that charity which "shall cover the multitude of sins"—which will clothe us with unaffected humility—constrain us "to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction"—to spend and be spent in our Master's service—to be sincere, without guile, unobtrusive, self-denied, bearing with each other's infirmities—and overflowing with love to God and to all mankind!

Such, brethren, are some of the beneficial effects which may be expected to result from our being steadily influenced by that elevated principle which reigns in the hearts and regulates the lives of all consistent, faithful Christians, and which so signally characterized the whole career of the great apostle Paul. To please God, implies, as you will have perceived, the performance of all the

duties which religion prescribes; not as a task, but with a willing and cheerful mind. We cannot please God unless we please ourselves at the same time. By this, I mean, that our chief and daily delight must arise from the practice of virtue and holiness—from a growing conformity to the will of God—from love to him—from zeal and activity in his service—from the hope and full assurance of enjoying him forever, through faith in the atoning sacrifice and perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ, the divine Mediator, who gave his life a ransom for many.

II. Now, in order to make a fair estimate of the wisdom of that man's choice who thus resolves, at every hazard, to please God; it may not be amiss just to glance at those who make it their principal business to please men. Whose grand object in life is to obtain their approbation. Who regard this as the sublimest object of human pursuit, and the attainment of it as constituting true greatness, and as the legitimate reward of superior talents, virtues or address.

It would be well for all whose hearts are intent on gaining popular or royal favour, to sit coolly down and carefully count the cost of its acquisition. Common prudence—mere worldly wisdom, dictates the propriety of such a course. No man ought to engage in any important enterprise, without previously ascertaining and duly weighing the difficulties which he may be called to encounter in order to success. Much less ought he to mark out to himself a line of conduct which may involve in it the character, destiny and happiness of his whole life,

without exercising all possible caution and foresight. And in this country, especially, does it behoove our ingenuous and aspiring youth to ponder well the system which they are about to adopt in regard to the subject under consideration.

I am aware that there are extremes to be avoided here, as everywhere else. That there is a Scylla and a Charybdis, between which it may be difficult, at all times, to find our way with perfect safety. With a view to honesty, and independence, and nobleness of spirit and of conduct, we may possibly verge to the extreme of manifesting indifference, and even contempt, for the judicious sentiments and salutary counsels of the wise and the good. To this species of high-mindedness, the apostle Paul lends no manner of countenance, either by precept or example. He was, on the contrary, remarkable for an amiable, conciliatory deportment; and for his indulgence to the innocent usages and prejudices of the various descriptions of both Jews and Gentiles among whom he laboured. He flattered none, but was courteous and civil to all. He complied with the customs and fashions of the place; when such compliance was not criminal. He neither ridiculed nor condemned what was in itself harmless or indifferent. And yet, during the whole course of his apostolic labours, he never once yielded to mere human opinion or authority, to the injury or dishonour of that heavenly religion which he inculcated. What a lesson for ministers of the gospel, and for all candidates for the holy office! He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

Guarded by the distinction and the limitation to which we have adverted; let us, for a moment, look at that extreme to which men are generally prone. Let us follow, with an impartial eye, the man who sighs for fame and honour and office; and who thinks no sacrifice too great to secure them. Observe the dark and devious course he is obliged to pursue—the humiliating drudgery to which he is subject—the various, and oftentimes contradictory part which he is compelled to act—while he obsequiously humours the foibles and caprices of every man whose censure he fears, or whose praise and patronage he covets. Such a man, and there are many such, has no will, no steady purpose of his own. He is veered about by every popular breath, and tempered to the spirit and complexion of the times. He is a time-server. To-day he is one thing, to-morrow another. In this company he wears one face, in that quite a different.

It is no matter what is the specific character of his ambition; whether to shine in the religious, or political, or literary world. The end is often the same in all. And the means ordinarily employed, at least in the first two are very similar. Ecclesiastics have shown as much eagerness after power and distinction as politicians; and as little scruple about the ways and means of succeeding. The vanity of some men is, probably, as much gratified in being popular preachers, as that of others in becoming ministers of state. Many have manifested as much anxiety to wear a mitre, and as little delicacy and conscience in their endeavours to gain it, as others to win a crown and to govern a nation. The lawn frequently

adorns the hypocrite, as the ermine does the knave. By these remarks, I mean to cast no reflection on ministers of the gospel generally; or on magistrates, judges and civil rulers generally. I refer to cases, however, of very common occurrence, and such as serve aptly and pertinently to illustrate the argument.

Now, suppose these accommodating, intriguing, ambitious spirits reach, at length, the goal of their wishes: some in the church, others in the state. And, suppose further, what scarcely ever happens, that they continue to enjoy their ill-gotten honours to the end of life; that is, during the cold winter of old age which still remains; for life is commonly near to its close before their purpose is half accomplished; yet, what is their acquisition—what is their reward? I know it would be useless to put this question to any actually engaged in the pursuit of these alluring and deceiving phantoms. They would, probably, smile at our simplicity, and our ignorance of the world. Or think us unreasonably austere and censorious; and as travelling far out of our province in presuming to bring under review their honourable principles and conduct. But, I put the question to those who are still strangers to ambition's wiles and infatuation; to mere spectators of the passing scenes of worldly pomp and folly, who can contemplate the imposing insignia of rank and office, without being dazzled or blinded by their splendour—and, again, I demand, what is their gain, even when completely successful; what the recompense for all their pains and toils and anxieties? Temporal distinctions, it may be, to the certain forfeiture of eternal honours; and the

favour of men instead of the favour of God and the testimony of a good conscience. Put into the one scale wealth, honour, power, to whatever amount you please; and put into the other the gray hairs and decrepitude of age—the evening of a long life of duplicity, intrigue, insincerity, restless ambition, crafty artifice, inconsistency, base compliances, cringing courtly sycophancy, or noisy swaggering professions of devotion to the populace—add to this odious mass of abomination, a near view of death, judgment, eternity, the pit of perdition, the fire that is not quenched, and the smoke of that torment which ascendeth up forever and ever—and, tell me, is the prize worth the price which you must pay for it?

But even this view of the case, dark as it is, is much too favourable. Men are not so easily pleased after all. And should you make the attempt, in the most artful, prudent and skilful manner, it is a thousand to one that you fail of success. The minds of men are so variable—so perpetually vibrating from one object to another—alternately pleased and displeased with the same thing—that you may be easily defeated, take what course you will. Judging from facts, the chances are against you. The far greater proportion of the candidates for popular favour do not succeed: the presumption therefore is, from experience and analogy, that you will not. When you shall have spent your best days, in order, as you imagine, to entitle yourselves to the esteem of your fellow-men, and when you are just going to reap the fruits of your long and arduous labours; behold, some unforeseen incident, some fortuitous atom floating in the

popular atmosphere, may thwart your proud schemes and blast all your hopes. Nay, men sometimes lose the confidence and respect of others just in proportion to the eagerness with which they court them. There is little encouragement therefore to make the attempt.

I do not mean to say that every man who attains to eminence in society—to high rank or power—is necessarily a bad man: but that those who pursue the crooked policy, and who stoop to the base artifices to which we have pointed, and, indeed, all who make the world, in any form, their idol, whether they seek its distinctions in an honourable or dishonourable way, are condemned by the divine law, and must be regarded as the enemies of God. Permit me also to observe, that, I have not advanced a syllable with the intent to discourage men from the service of their country and of their fellow-men. Every man is bound to serve his country, and to do good to others according to his capacity and opportunity. But every man is not bound to strive, by means foul or fair, to govern his country. Many a Christian serves his country effectually whose voice is never heard in her public councils. He is content to remain a private citizen, until he be fairly and honourably called into a more distinguished sphere; and then he will discharge his public and official duties, as in the presence of God, according to the best of his knowledge and ability, without any undue regard to personal consequences. And if a fickle people dismiss him without cause from their service, he retires from the chair of state with as much dignity and self-

possession as he advanced to it. He retires with the composure and independence of conscious integrity, and carries with him the love and respect of all good men.

Patriotism is an exalted virtue. It is a Christian virtue. But the thousands who style themselves patriots and friends of the people—party-zealots who arrogate to themselves and their party all the virtue and all the wisdom in the nation; no matter by what name their party is distinguished, or what political creed they profess to espouse; prefer but slender claims to the high character they assume. Self or party is their idol. The large ideas which swell a patriot's bosom cannot enter their minds, obscured and narrowed by prejudice and ambition. That they should sometimes be disappointed is no matter of wonder or regret.

But, it is not merely the selfish aspiring demagogue who is thus foiled in his struggles for the wreath of laurel and the plaudits of his countrymen. The most deserving—the most truly patriotic—those who indisputably merit the public favour, are oftentimes wantonly discarded when their services are no longer needed. They are scornfully thrown aside, like useless lumber, and suffered to moulder away in obscurity. Or, perhaps, the scaffold, the prison, or banishment from his country, is the doom of the man who has risked his all in her defence. Yes, my friends, the history of every nation, ancient and modern, is replete with examples of man's ingratitude to man. How often have kings cruelly neglected their most faithful, meritorious subjects, to

whom they were indebted for all their greatness, and without whom their crowns would not have been worth the wearing? Let the brave, magnanimous, triumphant leader of Justinian's imperial armies—let Columbus, the slighted father of this western world—let the amiable Fenelon, an exile from the court of a Prince to whom he had dared to be more faithful than any other subject in the kingdom—let these, and hundreds of others, be my comment and my proof.

How often, too, have Republics unpityingly beheld the war-worn veteran humbly begging a scanty subsistence from the very men whom his youthful valour had protected? How often, in their paroxysms of rage and jealousy, have they torn from their bosoms the most virtuous, upright, enlightened and useful citizens? Let Miltiades—let Aristides—let Socrates—let Cicero—let the De Witts of Holland—and multitudes of others who might be named, attest the fact. But the inconstancy and the ingratitude of Republics, as well as of Princes, have long since become proverbial.

Miserably disappointed then must he be, who ever expects to meet in the esteem and gratitude of his fellow-men, a satisfactory recompense for his labours and sacrifices in their behalf. Multitudes, in every age, have lamented, when too late, their folly in building on a foundation so unstable. When, instead of the anticipated golden prize—instead of the robes of state, and the greetings of the nation, they are met with coldness, scorn and pity. With what anguish, shame and remorse do they often exclaim; as did the once haughty, though

then disgraced and humbled minister of Henry VIII.—"Had I served my God, with half the zeal I served my king, He would not thus have forsaken me in my old age!" "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man. Yea, it is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes."

Thus, brethren, you see it is impossible to please all men. It is, in the highest degree, probable, that you will not succeed in pleasing even a small number for any great length of time together. It is absolutely certain, that, were you able to please the whole world; yet the world is not able to give you a reward adequate, or in any degree proportioned to the sacrifice you must make for the purpose. But, on the other hand, please God; and you may, at the same time, confer the greatest possible benefits on your fellow-men, though they may not choose to acknowledge them. Still you have the decided advantage of the mere man-pleaser, since he may be disappointed here, and he has no hope for the future: while you live in the certain expectancy of a rich reversion in the world of glory, however harshly or ungratefully you may be treated on earth by your fellow-men. Moses and the prophets, Christ and the apostles were all hated, reviled and persecuted in their day. And yet, who will now venture to say that they were not greater benefactors to mankind than the wretches who opposed them? They laboured patiently and perseveringly through life to promote the best interests of unhappy mortals. But, in no instance, did they seek to please them, by flattering their pride, or by minis-

tering to their vices. The world therefore rejected them, and affected to despise them. But God honoured them. And posterity, both the pious and the impious, are constrained to honour their memory; and to pay them a tribute of respectful homage which they cannot bestow on the most exalted of this world's favourites.

When in a right mood for contemplating and fairly estimating human character—how very *little*, how truly insignificant, do the *great* men whom the world have delighted to honour, appear by the side of the man of God, who preserved his integrity in the midst of a wicked and perverse generation, undaunted by threats and tortures, unmoved by promises and allurements; like Elijah, like Daniel, like Paul, and ten thousand others, who steadfastly adhered to their Master's cause in the day when faith was tried by fire—when the whole power and ingenuity of hostile kings and nations were exerted to terrify and to crush them? Who would degrade such men, though stoned, imprisoned, scourged, buffeted, exiled, murdered—by comparing them with the conquerors, and heroes, and sages on whom have been lavished the praises and the adulation of centuries?

But posterity generally have eyes to distinguish, and candour to do justice. On the page of history we can make wise and impartial discriminations. And we involuntarily, and often unconsciously, do homage to the few who have had courage to be virtuous. I say unconsciously, for what effect after all does this spontaneous testimony to the merit of the sainted dead produce on our own conduct? Do we not still, in spite of their

example, and warning voice, follow the multitude to do evil? Does not the fear of man—a slavish regard to his opinion—a desire to please him—or, at least, a dread of displeasing him, restrain us from stepping boldly forward in the cause of truth and virtue? It is the fashion among our friends and acquaintances to be irreligious, and we have not resolution to resist the fashion, although it will lead us to ruin, and we know it. Probably, no consideration has more influence on the minds of youth in deterring them from religion than this. The maxims and customs of the world present an invincible barrier in their way to duty and piety. They dare not be singular. The ridicule of their companions suggests to them more fearful terrors than the wrath of the Almighty. The vengeance of Heaven they can brave; but the sneers of the witling and the fool they cannot encounter. They are ready to forfeit the approbation of the wise and the good, but they cannot resist the fascinations, or endure the frowns of the wicked.

One artful, insinuating, unprincipled profligate has been often seen to acquire more influence among his associates than ten discreet, judicious, exemplary Christians. Such is the delusive, bewitching, blinding character and tendency of vice. A friend may counsel—a minister of the gospel may warn—an affectionate parent may entreat—but all in vain. They are borne along by the stream of fashion: and in spite of every motive and of every conviction, they suffer themselves to be hurried down to the deep gulf, where repentance and remorse will overtake them speedily; but, where hope, the last

friend of the wretched, can never gain admittance. There, indeed, they may meet their companions and seducers. There they may find the fashionable, the gay and the honourable. There they will behold the votaries of pleasure and of mammon—the proud, the revengeful, the profane, the unchaste, the scoffer, the duellist, and the murderer. But all these will be transformed into fiends and tormentors. Instead of alleviating misery, they will add fuel to the flame which can never be extinguished, and give a keener anguish to the gnawings of the worm which never dies. Is there infatuation—is there consummate folly among the children of men—and is not this the infatuation and the folly the most inexplicable and pre-eminent? That a man should submit to be undone—to be trampled in the dust by his enemies—to be driven along like a lamb to the slaughter, or be led in chains like a malefactor to the gibbet, by pretended friends: where can be found a parallel to folly and infatuation like this?

Where is the man who labours to decoy the unwary from the path of duty and rectitude—who solicits his companion to sinful indulgences and excesses? Where is the destroyer of innocence, the insnarer of youth, the tempter to crime? Such a man is a demon of darkness—he is the emissary of hell—wherever or whoever he be! Whatever may be his character or standing or reputation in the world, he is the most odious and horrible monster in the Universe of God. The master whom he serves is not, in our view, so base, so foul a creature as he. That such a fiend, in human shape, should ever

be found lurking and prowling for his prey in the consecrated groves of science, and within the hallowed walls of the temple of God.—Be astonished, O ye Heavens, at this!—This is a thought which does not admit of comment. It is too big with horror to be dwelt on. I dismiss it with the fervent hope, that, to every person present, it is as dreadful and appalling as it can be to the speaker.

Still, however, the opinions of the ungodly multitude sway our determinations and constrain us to follow in their train. Though we may not sit down in the seat of the scornful, and become the open advocates of vice, or the shameless adversaries of religion; still we shun her mild control and refuse her wholesome restraints. Though her ways be ever ways of pleasantness and all her paths peace: though length of days be frequently in her right hand, and in her left riches and honour: though the divine word be pledged, that, if we seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, all needed temporal blessings shall be ours: though the history of man demonstrate the wisdom and excellence of our holy religion, and the folly and danger of opposing or neglecting it: yet we persist in preferring the favour and the praise of mortals to the favour and approbation of God, who freely giveth all things richly to enjoy to them that love and obey him. This is according to nature, though it be contrary to our reason. For even heathen philosophy could teach us, and has taught us, that, no enjoyment can be purer, more substantial or more exalted, than that which flows from a mind at peace with God

and with itself. Which is independent of the caprice of fortune and the vicissitudes of time; which is unaffected by the malice of men or the convulsions of the world.

"Men and Brethren," said Paul, with the most perfect composure, when arraigned before the Jewish Sanhedrim, "I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day." With what a generous confidence does conscious virtue inspire the breast of a faithful servant of God.—With what serenity of soul can he contemplate the frowns and adversities, the changes and revolutions of this mortal scene! He is the only man on earth who can say with truth, and with a feeling of the sublime, "I fear God, and I have no other fear." He alone can march fearless through the troubles of life, and fearless through the dark valley of death.

This discourse ought long since to have been brought to a close: but I feel constrained to trespass, for once, still further upon your patience. Seldom have I consented, by appearing in this awful place, to deprive you of the labours of more worthy and far abler messengers of peace. Gladly had I been a hearer this day, as on former days, could I have been satisfied that duty did not demand of me this last humble testimony to the truth and excellence of that holy religion which I profess: and which, it may soon be my privilege, and, I trust, with a purer zeal, to proclaim in a region of comparative ignorance and darkness.

I am now addressing an audience, on many accounts, of more than ordinary interest; and, I need hardly add,

dear to me beyond every other. I am aware, indeed, that one immortal soul is as good as another. That the soul of a beggar, of a savage or a slave is as precious as the soul of a philosopher, a statesman or an emperor. But still, the Christian philanthropist may be allowed to look beyond individual claims and individual happiness. He may contemplate the welfare of society at large: and in doing so, he will see reason frequently to be more solicitous for the conversion of a man of high standing and influence than for the conversion of a man in humble life. Because the former does, as it were, hold in his hands the destinies of thousands of his fellow-men; while the latter lives and dies comparatively to himself. I presume that none will mistake my meaning—nor suppose that I would have the humble poor man passed by, or think his salvation of little moment. Every soul is of more value than a world. Upon the most benevolent principle, therefore, may we pray that they, especially, may become pious whose example and whose counsel will be likely to constrain many to walk in wisdom's ways and to become candidates for a heavenly crown. What a blessed paradise would not our country speedily become, were all our physicians, lawyers, politicians, instructors of youth, and college graduates, pious, faithful, consistent Christians?

With this prospective view to future good, I have often surveyed the little company who usually assemble in this chapel, with emotions of unutterable concern. As I have listened to the heavenly message, from time to time, proclaimed from this sacred desk, and felt the force of

overwhelming argument, and the powerful, but tender, appeal to the heart and the conscience,—I have said, or thought, surely no ingenuous youth can any longer resist. He must be convinced. He will arise and return to his Father. And then, should all obey the heavenly mandate, and all become the reconciled friends of the Saviour, and all go forth, at length, enlisted on the side of truth and piety, and under the banners of the great Captain of salvation: what a mighty influence will they not exert, in their several spheres of enterprise and benevolence, upon the moral aspect, and the immortal destinies of thousands—and these again, upon the character and destinies of millions of their fellow-men, during the lapse of ages yet to come? Delightful anticipation.

But, in a moment, the illusion vanishes. The prospect darkens. The voice of persuasive eloquence ceases to be heard. The sound of the gospel trumpet dies away upon the ear. Conscience again slumbers undisturbed. Thoughtlessness and indifference mark the countenance and the conduct. Mirth and pleasure banish the serious purpose, and silence the earnest inquiry—"what must I do to be saved?"—which was just bursting from the lips of the trembling and half-awakened sinner. Then am I constrained to reverse the picture which a too sanguine fancy had drawn. Then do I behold the same accomplished and promising youth, already high in the world's esteem—courted, flattered, followed, imitated. But, alas, they are dragging in their train hosts of immortal beings to the chambers of despair! They have gained a fearful elevation only to sink the deeper into perdition's inter-

minable gulf, and to become the eternal execration of the multitudes who perish by their hands!

You are destined, my youthful hearers, to be the instruments of incalculable good or of incalculable mischief in the world. Let this thought, even now, enter deeply into your hearts. It is enough to make an angel serious. For what purpose are you training here? Why has Providence distinguished you so far above millions of other youth? Wherefore all these precious privileges? Is it to fit you to wield a more powerful arm against Heaven's Almighty King—and to spread desolation and misery and death around you with greater certainty and effect?

You are, many of you, about to leave this venerable seat of science. Your academical career is closed. You will make your own estimate of the value of the instructions, and of the opportunities for improvement which you have enjoyed while resident within these walls. You are already rejoicing in the prospect of being speedily free from college restraints; and of going forth into the world as candidates for its honours and emoluments. I wish not to diminish or to damp the joy which you may reasonably feel in the anticipation of an event so long and so ardently desired. But suffer me, with the most affectionate solicitude, again to remind you, that human science may prove a curse as well as a blessing. That, it is possible, some of you may have been preparing here only to act a more conspicuous part in the fiend-like work of corrupting and debasing the human

character, of blasting immortal hopes, and of scattering the seeds of vice and misery wherever you go.

I rejoice, indeed, in the belief, that, however little I may have contributed towards guarding you against the snares and temptations which beset your path, and towards imbuing your minds with the salutary principles of virtue and religion, which alone can render science a handmaid to usefulness and true honour, yet that this sacred duty has not been neglected. Others have laboured, and laboured zealously and faithfully to enrich your hearts with heavenly wisdom and enlightened piety. You have been kindly conducted to the pure fountain of truth and excellence. The Bible has been opened to your view. Its precious pages you have diligently studied. Its sublime doctrines and mysteries have been ably unfolded. Its practical precepts, its terrible sanctions and penalties, its cheering promises, consolations and rewards have been affectionately exhibited, and pressed home upon the conscience.

Let the Bible be the companion of your future lives and studies. Yes, were I now about to give my dying counsel to the dearest objects of my heart, I would say—clasp the Bible to your bosoms as your best friend and counsellor. Read it daily, and with humble prayer for the illuminating influences of that blessed Spirit who first inspired and revealed it. There you will learn the origin, the fall, the whole history of our once innocent and happy, but now guilty and wayward race. There you will behold the justice, holiness, wisdom, goodness and mercy of the infinite Creator, and Judge, and King, and Saviour,

all harmonious in punishing and in redeeming the rebels against his government. There you will read the true character of your own hearts. A character which your reason and conscience will constrain you to recognize. There you will discover the necessity of that radical change in your whole nature, without which, you cannot delight in acts of dutiful and holy obedience. There you will imbibe that humble, teachable temper and spirit which will dispose you, instead of cavilling at the divine economy, to sit down meekly at the foot of the cross, and to learn of Jesus, as little children, the wonders of his redeeming grace.

The Bible will become a lamp to your feet, and a light to your path, during the whole of your earthly pilgrimage. It will teach you how to use the world so as not to abuse it. It will tell you how to employ riches, and honours, and learning, and power and influence, so as rightly to enjoy them yourselves, and to render them subservient to the happiness of others It will animate your breasts with a hope and a faith, it will inspire you with a courage and resolution, which will carry you safely through every trial, cause you to triumph over every obstacle, and to rejoice, with joy unspeakable and full of glory, in the midst of an opposing and persecuting world.—Should it ever please God to prove you as he proved Job, and Daniel, and Stephen, and Paul; and as he is daily proving multitudes whom he loves and whom he will presently welcome to the brightest mansions in his heavenly kingdom.

And why should *you* expect to escape the common lot of humanity? The Sun of prosperity will not always gild your path. The season of sorrow and anguish and desertion may arrive when you least think of it. Obloquy, reproach, contumely and scorn may meet you where you had fondly anticipated sympathy and support. You may be wounded in the house of your friends. Yes, those friends, for whom you could have sacrificed everything but your integrity, whose confidence and esteem you valued above wealth and station, whose good opinion and kindness you would have relied on as certainly in the dungeons of the Inquisition, or at the stake of martyrdom, as if you had been the idols of a nation, or firmly seated on the throne of the Cæsars—these cherished, revered friends may forsake you when the first dark cloud gathers over your heads, and leave you unpitied and alone, to breast the storm of envy, jealousy and malice, as best you can. Then comes the fearful trial of your faith and charity. Then pierces the heart the keenest arrow ever levelled by the enemy of human peace.

Friendship! Is it then delusion all? Is it but a name for fools and knaves to sport with? No, there is friendship in heaven, and there is friendship among all the children of God. You may need this last and bitterest token of your Father's love, to dissolve the charm which had seduced your affections from Him who will have the undivided heart. Then, in this moment of agony and universal gloom, comes the Bible with its kindly reproofs and hallowed consola-

tions: saying—"The friendship of the world is enmity with God. Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. My kinsfolk have failed, and my familiar friends have forgotten me. Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me." But, "like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother. When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up. The Lord is my light and my salvation: whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life: of whom shall I be afraid? The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles. The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart: and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all. He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken. The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him. Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord."

In a few days or weeks we part—to meet no more on this side the eternal world! This is a declaration so often repeated, on similar occasions, in this institution, that, it has become almost a matter of course: and the words scarcely convey a meaning to the mind. For teachers and pupils to part, is generally regarded as an occasion of congratulation and rejoicing to one or the other; and oftentimes to both. That youth should

be eager to depart from the scene of juvenile effort, emulation and discipline—however beneficial it may have been to them — experience tells us is natural and common. That they should contemplate, with joyous anticipations, the period when they may be permitted to gather the flowers which fancy strews along the pathway of future life; and to enter upon the proud theatre of manly enterprise and generous ambition, is not to be wondered at:—nor shall it receive from us any cynical rebuke or condemnation.

But there is an aspect, under which this subject presents itself to the eye and the heart of those who feel the deepest interest in their welfare, solemn and awful and melancholy and distressing beyond the power of language to portray. It is the thought, that, in the midst of all this buoyancy of spirit and of hope—of all this earthly attractiveness and fascination—of all these bright and cheering prospects—of all these dreams of virtuous exertion and honourable distinctions—of all those pleasures, joys and rewards which seem to stretch along to the remotest verge of the horizon of youthful imagination; and which cluster around his every view in the richest groups and most varied profusion, as if to chide his delay and backwardness to improve the passing moment, and to seize the proffered bounty of nature, thus pressed upon his acceptance—Oh, it is the thought, that, at this very moment of purest sunshine, when all creation seems to smile, and to hail with ecstasy the commencement of that youthful career which promises so much glory and happiness—it is the dreadful thought,

that DEATH may be secretly lurking in the midst of the happy company, and insidiously making his approach to the vitals of some unsuspecting youth, on whose countenance plays the almost heavenly smile of assured confidence and unmingled delight in the fairy scenes which a long life is yet to realize! Ah, my friends, would to God, there existed no reason for this heart-rending—and, to all human nature's proudest, noblest schemes, most revolting, tantalizing, overwhelming thought!

But when did a class of Nassau's favoured sons listen to the last paternal counsels and monitions of age and wisdom in this place,* to whom the thought would have been unseasonable? Or, from whose number one and another have not been summoned to judgment, within one or a few years after their departure hence? It is true, God, in his infinite goodness, has hitherto preserved these walls from the great destroyer: but frequently he is permitted to come very near to us, and, as it were, to spy out the victim whom he will presently seize. And many such victims have been seized within a few short months after we had bid them an affectionate adieu, who appeared as likely to live and prosper as any who now hear me.

Every year has added its notes of mourning to the catalogue of our youthful Alumni. Within the past week, we have heard of the death of no less than

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* A reference is here of course intended to the customary Valedictory Addresses of the Presidents of the College.

three,* (God only knows how many more there may have been,) whose singularly amiable and exemplary deportment, while students of this College, will endear their memory to all who here had the happiness to instruct, or to associate with them: and whose talents and enterprise would have ensured them all that their several professions could reasonably have commanded, or their ambition coveted. Rejoice, therefore, with trembling, in the view of that resplendent but most deceiving world into which you are about to enter. Remember, that, like Sergeant, and Johnson, and Crawford, you may be cut down in the midst of the most brilliant and successful career—or in the first stages of pious and benevolent effort—or before you can even begin the work on which your hearts are all intent. Read your own destiny in the fate of others. Let the dead speak, and warn you to be wise. Let death be provided for first, and above all things; then peace and joy shall crown your lot, be its complexion what it may. Then the world shall appear in its true colours: and though it may doom you to many trials, labours and disappointments, yet you can ever look, with a holy calmness and delight, beyond this tempestuous ocean, to that tranquil haven—to that blessed country where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary be at rest.

We part then, dear youth, to meet no more on earth.

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* Viz.: Elihu Spencer Sergeant, Esq., of Philadelphia; Rev. Daniel Johnson, of Newark, N. J.; and James Crawford, Esq., of Georgetown, D. C.

Shall we meet in heaven? God grant that we may all meet in heaven, and rejoice together in heaven—through infinite riches of free grace in Christ Jesus the righteous, who is over all, God blessed forever!

And, now, farewell to these hallowed, loved, long-frequented retreats—these literary and scientific halls, and walks, and groves—these delicious fountains of truth and wisdom—these repositories of the richest treasures of ancient and modern genius—these sacred tombs which cover the ashes of the pious and the mighty dead—these healthful and cheering hills and plains—this favoured land of churches and of Bibles, of peace, liberty and abundance—these reverend fathers, brothers, friends—honoured colleagues, beloved pupils, respected fellow-citizens—I bid you all an affectionate—a long—a last

FAREWELL!

THE PASTORAL OFFICE AND WORK.

[NASHVILLE, DECEMBER 25, 1833.]

THE PASTORAL OFFICE AND WORK.

[A SERMON AT THE INSTALLATION OF REV. JOHN T. EDGAR.*]

"For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God."—*Acts*, xx. 27.

In the solemn and deeply interesting interview between Paul and the Elders of Ephesus, which took place at Miletus, as recorded in the twentieth chapter of the Acts, we have a declaration, on the part of the Apostle, of the manner in which he had fulfilled the duties of his ministry; and also his valedictory charge to the brethren, his fellow-labourers in the same holy vocation.

I shall not attempt to enumerate, much less to discuss, the several topics dwelt on by the Apostle, nor to construct a regular discourse upon any one even of the most prominent and striking. Instead of confining my remarks to the legitimate province suggested by a particular text or passage of Scripture, I shall take the liberty to direct your attention to sundry matters and considerations, rather miscellaneous perhaps, and not strictly connected by any rigidly logical or ethical principles of unity or affinity, but which appear to me not wholly

* A Discourse delivered at the installation of the Rev. John T. Edgar as pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Nashville, December 25th, 1833, before the Synod of West Tennessee.

irrelevant to the peculiar solemnities of the present occasion.

I have been directed by the Presbytery to which I owe subjection in the Lord, to preach the customary sermon preparatory to the formal ceremony of installing a Bishop or Pastor over this Christian church and congregation.

The relation which is about to be constituted between this people and a minister of Jesus Christ—the relation, namely, of pastor and flock—is assuredly one of no ordinary import or interest. It cannot be contemplated without the deepest emotion, nor be ratified without the most profound conviction of the awful responsibilities incurred by both the contracting parties, as well as by the ecclesiastical judicatory which ordains and sanctions the transaction.

Let the fervent prayerful aspirations of every heart ascend in silence to the great Fountain of goodness, that all our services may be begun, continued and ended with God. That we may be favoured with his gracious presence and holy benediction. And that all the official acts of his church and people this day may be owned, and abundantly honoured to the glory of his great name, and to the everlasting salvation of us and our children—through Jesus Christ our Lord and Redeemer! Amen.

To live and labour—nay, if need be, to suffer and die—in his Master's service, as did the illustrious Paul, must be the earnest and honest wish of every faithful minister of the gospel. He could ask no higher privilege. The most burning zeal—the holiest ambition

(if such a phrase be allowable—) could covet no more exalted or glorious destiny. To be able, in the hour of dissolution, and before the Searcher of hearts to exclaim—"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day:"—must prove the consummation of the Christian minister's brightest hopes. Alas, how many choose rather to live like Balaam; and with him are content occasionally to utter the good, yet often unavailing prayer—"Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."

To exhibit Paul in all the hallowed brilliancy of his character, it would be necessary to transcribe his entire history from the Acts, and to quote largely from the rich contents of his own masterly Letters. But this is not my purpose. Were I called on, however, for a portrait of a perfect minister of the cross, Paul should sit for the picture. Whether, indeed, Paul were more eminent than any or all of the apostles, I pretend not to decide. It is sufficient that we know much more of him than of the rest; and that all we do know redounds to his fame and bespeaks his excellence. If I might venture to give counsel to my younger brethren, I would bid them study at the feet of Paul, and to take him as their model. And were any people desirous to ascertain what kind of man they might safely elect as their spiritual guide and pastor, I would direct them to Paul. Let them, too, study Paul; and they will never be at a loss for a just

standard of ministerial qualifications. If they cannot find Paul's equal in every respect, they may at least avoid the danger of confiding their souls to a man destitute of Paul's spirit. The Epistles of Paul—more especially those to Timothy and Titus—ought to be diligently and prayerfully perused by every man who is about to assume the sacred office of a bishop, and by the people who are anxious to enjoy his ministrations.

The mutual duties, obligations, affections, interests and responsibilities, involved in this holy relation of minister and people — who can adequately delineate their character or appreciate their importance? Is it then to be our happy privilege this day to welcome from the chief Shepherd and Bishop of souls — the great Head of the church—a man after his own heart to go in and out before us, who will fulfil all his will, and be faithful unto death? (Acts, xiii. 22.) Will he study to show himself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth? (2 Tim. ii. 15.) Will he be a man of peace, of patience, of zeal according to knowledge, of forbearance, of prayer, of meekness and humility, of untiring industry and perseverance, of inflexible integrity and courage, of decision and mildness, of prudence, charity and holy living?

Will he preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and doctrine? (2 Tim. iv. 2.) Will he take heed unto himself, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy

Ghost hath made him overseer, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood? (Acts, xx. 28.) Will he be an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity? And give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine? (1 Tim. iv. 12, 13.)

Will he, like Apollos, be an eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures, well instructed in the way of the Lord; fervent in the spirit, speaking and teaching diligently the things of the Lord? (Acts, xviii. 24, 25.) Will he, like Peter, teach us to lay aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings; and as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that we may grow thereby? (1 Pet. i. 1, 2.) Will he, as Paul directs, shun profane and vain babblings; and avoid foolish and unlearned questions, knowing that they gender strifes; and that the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient; in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves: if God, peradventure, will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth? (2 Tim. ii. 16, 23, 24, 25.)

Will he, with paternal solicitude, watch over the tender lambs of the flock, and bear them in his arms to the blessed Saviour, and strive to train them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord? Will he preach the gospel to the poor; and kindly minister to the sick, the afflicted, the despised, the imprisoned, the widow and the orphan? May the homeless outcast, the mourning prodigal, the exiled stranger, the degraded

bondman, the famishing pauper, look to him for solace and sympathy, for counsel and relief, as to an angel of mercy and goodness? Will he be the honest friend, the faithful monitor, the discreet counsellor, the instructive companion, to all with whom he may associate or over whom he may exert the influence of his high official character?

Will he be "a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers?" (Tit. i. 8, 9.) Will he be as the scribe, spoken of by our Lord, "which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, and is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old?" (Math. xiii. 52.) Will he keep back nothing that is profitable unto us; but teach us publicly, and from house to house, testifying to all men, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ? Will he never cease to warn every one night and day with tears? (Acts, xx. 20, 21, 31.) Will he, at every hazard and sacrifice, declare unto us all the counsel of God; and know nothing among us, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified?

Such interrogatories, it is obvious, might be continued until every topic pertaining to the ministry of reconciliation should be reviewed and exhausted. So full and clear, so expressive and pointed, is the language of Scripture on this subject, that not a single trait or

feature or quality or gift or attribute of the Christian preacher has escaped the pen or pencil of inspiration.

But, notwithstanding the flood of light which is shed upon the subject in Scripture—notwithstanding the example of the prophets, of Christ, and the apostles—notwithstanding all the instruction which precept, repeated and varied, and amply illustrated and confirmed by contemporaneous practice, could afford—we are constrained to admit, that, in all ages, egregious mistakes have occurred. Many a false prophet has been received as a true one. Many a wolf has appeared in sheep's clothing. Many a wicked spirit has been hailed as an angel of light. Many a Judas, and many a Simon Magus, have been numbered among the accredited ambassadors of heaven. Many, very many, have made a good beginning—have appeared zealous and ardent and courageous in proclaiming the gospel for a season;—but when persecution assailed them, or when worldly prosperity and the incense of human flattery addressed the latent springs of vanity or pride, of avarice or ambition, they have turned aside and proved reprobate—"concerning faith have made shipwreck"—and given mournful evidence that the root of the matter had never been in them.

Christendom too, for centuries past, has been disgraced by the enormities of priestcraft, and has been groaning under a yoke of spiritual despotism and of legalized abominations, which the Paganism of Egyptian darkness and of Grecian philosophy would have blushed at. Who could read the history of the Christian world, and of what is currently styled the Christian church, at least

since the usurpation of all ecclesiastical power by the ambitious Constantine, without horror and indignation? And were he to judge of the Christian religion exclusively from this dark, bloody, and damning record, he would inevitably reject with scorn the whole system.

Blessed be God! The original charter and constitution of Messiah's pure and holy spiritual kingdom is still in the hands of his people. And to the law and the testimony, to the prophets and apostles, we appeal from every unrighteous decision of kings and pontiffs, of philosophers and wits, of infidels and scoffers; and from all the outrages perpetrated in the name of Christ, since the rejoicing Angel first proclaimed at his birth—"Glory to God in the highest: and on earth peace, good-will towards men!"

The Christian world, since the days of Luther, has been gradually assuming a more decent, if not a more heavenly aspect. It is true, we every day witness, or hear or read of scenes and transactions, in some Christian land or other, which the grossest superstition and most besotted infatuation of the tenth century could hardly have surpassed in folly or madness. And it is only in our own day that Protestant Christians, with the Bible in every pulpit and within reach of every man, have begun to learn some very plain and simple gospel lessons.

We have made the grand discovery, for example, that the traffic in human flesh is not quite Christian. After having stolen and forced from their native home, and transported across the ocean or buried beneath its waves,

some forty millions of our African brothers; of whom and their descendants scarcely six millions remain as the fragments and witnesses of our Christian charity; we are just beginning to boast of our Christian chivalry in attempting to close the floodgates of this long-continued and more than fiendish contempt of the most obvious dictates of justice and humanity.

Nor has Africa wept alone under the scourge of Christian barbarism. Where are the millions of red men who once held undisputed dominion over this mighty continent, from pole to pole, and from ocean to ocean? The meek, peaceful, self-denying, benevolent Christian, of another hemisphere, whose theoretic creed is, to do to others as he would have them do unto him, has kindly undertaken the management of all these fair lands upon his own account.—After having exterminated the aboriginal possessors, by means and with views, which he dares to parade upon the page of history, as disinterested, magnanimous, philanthropic, Christian![*]

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* In thus adverting to the slave trade and the gradual disppearance of the Indian tribes from a large portion of this continent, the author had not the slightest reference to any of the *vexed* questions now in agitation respecting slavery or the Indians. If sins were committed in either case, they were the sins of Christendom. As such he noticed them. He believes that pure Christian charity would have dictated a different system of policy and conduct in both cases. Such instances prove that one Christian age may countenance what the superior light of another will condemn. Or, in other words, that successive discoveries have been made, and are still making, in Christian ethics:—which was the point to be illustrated.

It may be added, that he does not censure the conduct of all the Christian colonies upon these shores as equally criminal or barbarous.

How have the Jews been treated among Christian nations and by Christian churches during the last fifteen hundred years? How are they treated *now* in almost every Christian state and city under heaven?

It was, not long since, the acknowledged doctrine of all the civilians, jurists, statesmen, divines, and princes of Christian Europe, that it was lawful and meritorious to wage wars of extermination against the infidel Moslems and the idolatrous heathen. And this antichristian prejudice is scarcely yet eradicated.

Look at the history of European colonization and commerce in every quarter of the globe. Alas, what a debt does Christendom owe to pagan Asia, to pagan Africa, to pagan America! Will it ever be repaid? To this point, we are but just beginning to direct our Christian charities and energies. It is a most melancholy and most disgraceful fact, that wherever Christians have planted colonies or established trading factories in the vicinity of

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There were several noble exceptions to the general rule; particularly in North America. European Christians have, however, succeeded by conquest or purchase, by fraud or violence, in acquiring the exclusive possession of nearly the whole continent. And when or where did they ever exhibit the Christian virtues in such an amiable light as to command the respect, or to secure the confidence, or to gain the affections, or to ameliorate the character of the natives?

But, it has been said, it is the order of Providence that the savage pagan should give place to the civilized Christian: and that the totality of human happiness is thereby greatly augmented. Every species of injustice, robbery and oppression might be defended upon the same ground. These all occur under the divine government. The past and present condition of the Jews has been matter of recorded prophecy for some five and twenty centuries: is it therefore innocent to wrong, persecute and murder them?

either Pagans or Mohammedans, they have made the natives worse instead of better. They have invariably inspired the natives with hatred and aversion to Christianity instead of winning them to its adoption. This is strictly true even in regard to Liberia. And the missionary of the present day succeeds vastly better among the remote and perfectly unsophisticated heathen in every part of the world, than among those who have come in contact with, and under the polluting influence of the Christian colonist, soldier, sailor or merchant, or who have been doomed to share the tender mercies of a Christian government.

Assuredly, we are only beginning to learn something of the nature and obligations of Christian benevolence. To believe that the Jew and the Turk, the Hindoo and the Malay, the Negro and the Indian, have souls to be saved; and that it is our duty to contribute a little, a very little indeed, of our worldly abundance for the purpose. We have Bible Societies, Tract Societies, Missionary Societies, Colonization and various other Societies, to accelerate the progress of the great enterprises now on foot for the amelioration of the human character and condition. But we give as grudgingly to these institutions, as does the growling miser to the sturdy beggar—and often for the same reason—namely, to get rid of annoying importunity.

We have just begun to learn that whisky drinking is no very Christian accomplishment. That a Christian nation of drunkards, is a phrase nearly as ill-sounding and unseemly as a Christian nation of robbers or cut-

throats. Intemperance therefore, or rather its parent and nurse, the moderate use of ardent spirits, will, we trust, soon be assigned to its proper category among the "damnable heresies" still to be exposed and to be rooted out of the Christian church.

But duelling is still sustained by the public sentiment of honourable Christian gentlemen, and by all the fashionable literature of the Christian world. And so is horse-racing—the most destructive and pernicious species of gambling, dissipation, and reckless knavery, ever yet contrived by the ingenuity of man or demon. Under the shallow pretext of improving the animal *horse*, the sages of Christendom, in their legislative capacity, deliberately expose to ruin, soul and body, reputation and estate, hundreds of thousands of immortal men, women, and children every year.

Christian men, moreover, have not been content with conquering, killing, or enslaving heathens, Jews and Mohammedans. They have persecuted and murdered one another, for opinion's sake, with a relentless fury utterly unparalleled in the history of human depravity. The spirit of intolerant bigotry has pervaded the nominal Christian church in every age. And few of the grand divisions into which it has, under divers influences and from divers causes, been rent and organized, can plead exemption from this foul blot. The reformers from persecuting popery became persecutors in their turn, and assumed as lofty a port and as lordly a bearing and as monstrous prerogatives, as had ever been manifested or arrogated by the infallible hierarchy of the

Eternal City. The intrepid Zuinglius, the amiable Melancthon, the learned Calvin, the magnanimous Knox, the martyred Cranmer, were all practical or theoretical persecutors—as were Henry VIII., Elizabeth, and the Stuarts — with a thousand other royal and mitred dignitaries and reverend doctors in every Christian land and at each successive period. Nor has this odious tyranny, which commands conformity to the doctrines and ceremonial of a particular church, been even yet subverted or exploded. The fires of Smithfield, the dungeons and the rack of the Inquisition, Star-Chamber and High-Commission Courts, Test and Corporation Acts, Roman Catholic disfranchisement, Autos da fe, it is true, no longer hold out their terrors and tortures to the trembling heretic, who may choose to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience. But there is still much positive and barbarous persecution; as recent occurrences in several of the Swiss Cantons and elsewhere may testify. And the Jews are yet obnoxious to all the perils and penalties of aliens under many Christian governments. And even where the lives, property, personal liberty, and political franchises of the subject or citizen are secured and protected by law, there is rife the same persecuting spirit, the same uncharitable ambition to prescribe and control and govern in all matters of religion as heretofore. Though after a different fashion, and by a less revolting species of machinery.

At these several facts and enormities, and perversions of Scripture, reason and the inalienable rights of man,

I have just glanced, in order to show that, while Christians have commenced learning the hornbook of Christian ethics, they have much still to learn. If in this science, such wonderful discoveries and advances have been made within the last twenty or thirty years; is it not presumable that a vast deal more remains to be achieved?

I am inclined to think that the province of Christian morals—of practical duty—of that comprehensive and universal holiness without which no man shall see the Lord—is not sufficiently studied; and, of course, not as thoroughly developed and inculcated as it ought to be, by the clergy of our own or of any other church. And that herein they shun or fail "to declare all the counsel of God."

I beg your attention to a few additional particulars illustrative of this branch of my subject.

It was predicted by our Saviour that Antichrist should come. And St. John assures us that "even now [i.e. in his day] are there many antichrists." It is evident from the context, as well as from the whole tenor of the gospel, that whatever contravenes the great law of charity or love, is antichristian. And that whatever savours of this world—of its principles, maxims, honours, riches, vices, policy, usages, selfishness, malice, cruelty—is also antichristian. Now the kingdom of Christ is not of this world. It is a spiritual kingdom. It was never intended by its divine founder that it should be extended, or built up, or sustained by any carnal means or instruments, by fire or faggot,

sword or sceptre. It was not destined to assume an organization similar to the ambitious political establishments of mankind; or to exhibit the external pomp and splendour and power and attributes of worldly sovereignty. It courted not, even in its friendless unprotected infancy, the smiles and patronage of kings and emperors. It sought not a partnership with the existing civil governments; much less did it arrogate the right to control or interfere with such governments in the slightest degree. It contemplated no unhallowed union of church and state; no contaminating alliance with the secular throne; no meretricious adornment from the treasuries of venal idolized royalty. No such commingling of the ecclesiastical and civil authorities was ever ordained; nor has it ever been countenanced by a single line or precept of the gospel. The church of Christ has been degraded, debased, adulterated, perverted, shorn of her glory, despoiled of her purity and beauty, and transformed into an engine of worldly ambition and despotism, by every such compliance, compact, association, or usurpation. Every radical deflection or departure from the original constitution of the kingdom, has been, is, and ever will be eminently antichristian.

Had it been the purpose of Messiah to conquer the world and to establish a splendid earthly kingdom, as the Jews expected and as his first disciples hoped, he could easily have done so by human, divine or angelic agency. But, from the beginning, he declared that such was not his object: and he expressly and

repeatedly warned his followers against this fondly cherished delusion. They were to go forth as lambs among wolves—to labour and suffer in preaching the gospel of mercy and charity to enemies—and not themselves to become wolves in the midst of a defenceless flock, or to lord it over God's heritage, or to attempt, by physical force or spiritual terrors, to subject even the most obstinate pagan idolaters to the faith and dominion of the cross.

Every church establishment, therefore, just so far as it is invested with powers, or just so far as it exercises powers, at variance with Christian charity—whether towards heathen, Jew, infidel, heretic, or dissenter—is essentially antichristian. Yet such, precisely, has been the condition of all Christendom, except our own happy Republic, ever since the commencement of the fourth century. A national church is, and must be antichristian; be its doctrines and forms what they may. It imposes by authority a faith and a mode of worship, which, from the very nature of the case, cannot be acceptable to the Deity, when the faith is not voluntarily embraced and the worship not voluntarily rendered. It always subjects non-conformists to some kinds of disabilities, burdens or penalties. It is often exclusive in its structure, laws and discipline, and affects to be the only true church in the land or in the world. Its spirit is arrogant, overbearing; often intolerant and persecuting. Its tendency is to encourage and multiply bigots, hypocrites, formalists and time-servers. It is the nursery of dogmatism and

all manner of uncharitableness. The established Presbyterian church of Scotland, and the national Episcopal church of England, are just as antichristian as any Roman Catholic establishment whatever: so far, I mean, as the possession of secular power and the infliction of secular penalties can render them obnoxious to the appellation.

If this be so, then has Christendom yet to learn one of the first and most essential doctrines of the Christian school. A doctrine which has been utterly lost sight of during some fifteen hundred years past. This doctrine needs to be luminously unfolded and thoroughly taught in every part of our own country; for we are exceedingly prone to follow European example in religion as in most other matters. The crisis too has arrived, when agitators and alarmists are seeking, upon the very ground of this long cherished heresy in the Christian church, to excite the fears and jealousy and hostility of the people against the clergy, as a body whose systematic aim is to acquire the same political and ecclesiastical ascendency here, which their brethren hold and so stoutly maintain and defend in the old world. The doctrine of a church establishment—of a union of church and state—or that any one church is entitled to greater privileges or favour from government than another church or than all other churches—ought to be promptly, universally and most decidedly resisted, rejected and condemned as antichristian.

Again: The Christian ethical code enjoins the duty of making ample restitution, reparation, atonement, for all

frauds, injuries and wrongs inflicted upon our fellow-men. This satisfaction is to be rendered, when practicable, to the injured party, or to their posterity, or to their country, or to suffering humanity. No repentance can be genuine where this duty is neglected. "And Zaccheus stood, and said unto the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." This is a case in point. It is not in reference to flagrant acts of injustice merely — such as theft, robbery and notorious swindling—that the culprit need be told of his obligation to make restitution. It is that every day business-like creditable mode of getting more than we have a right to, which demands the searching scrutiny of the faithful pastor and the rigid application of the Christian rule. Zaccheus was, no doubt, a very honourable, civil gentleman in his station, and his gains were the result of that courteous mode of discharging his official duties, which is characteristic of similar functionaries in every age. And, but for his honest conscience, he might have continued to accumulate wealth in the same fraudulent manner without censure from the world: and he might have died at last with a fair reputation, as multitudes of a similar species do now. Suppose that all the members of the Christian church in these United States, who, by a regular course of thrifty management as it is usually deemed, have amassed fortunes, without suspicion or rebuke from the church or the world, were

this day to act exactly as did Zaccheus—what a disgorging of golden hoards should we not witness?

It is the duty of Christians to obey the laws of their country in all cases not incompatible with the laws of God. To pay all taxes, for example—"to render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's." The violation of laws, however arbitrary, which constitute a species of crime denominated *mala prohibita*, such as revenue and usury laws, is as contrary to gospel precept as the violation of laws prohibiting crimes *mala in se*—as much so as the violation of any command of the decalogue. Smuggling therefore becomes a crime, under the gospel code, like theft; and restoration to the same extent and in like manner is indispensable. Money obtained by usury—that is, by exacting more for its use than the law allows—cannot be retained a whit more consistently than stolen goods. No man can be a true penitent who has not made restitution for every such extortion. The equity, policy, or expediency of the law prescribing the market price of money can have nothing to do with the question. It may be as absurd or impracticable to regulate the value of money as it would be to regulate the price of cotton—and I believe it to be so. Still, whenever the law does fix the price of either money or cotton, we are bound as Christians to obey it. Is this branch of Christian ethics well understood by the people, fully explained by the preacher, and duly inspected and guarded by the church?

Sterling Christian honesty would lead a man to deal with his fellow-men in all things precisely as he would

deal with his Maker; and always as if the eye of his Maker were resting upon him and piercing the darkest recesses of his heart. His word would be just as good as his oath or his bond. So far from seeking to evade any obligation, he would be anxious to satisfy it to the uttermost farthing. While he would strictly obey the law, he would never think himself entitled to all he could get by the law. He would never resort to legal quibbles or informalities in order to void or nullify a contract, or to acquire an estate. Where is the Christian professor in this community whose word is always implicitly relied on; whose good faith is never doubted; whose upright mode of buying and selling and bargaining and paying is never suspected or questioned; whose known rule of practice is to "owe no man anything" which he is not able and willing to pay at the moment when due; who always does pay his debts; who never profits by the ignorance of youth or inexperience or mistakes or helplessness of others under any circumstances; who would rather be cheated than to cheat, or to lose than to gain by craft or ingenious trickery; who, in short, stands forth before the public a thorough, decided, inflexible, true-hearted, honest man? Now every Christian ought to be just such a man. And were all Christians thus distinguished, the world would not be so much puzzled, as it sometimes is, to discriminate between the Christian and the knave.

Men often countenance measures and do acts, in an associated capacity, which as individuals they would

reprobate. Were each member of a legislative or religious body, or of any corporation or fraternity or profession, to consider himself as personally responsible for every result which he contributes to produce—how different, in most cases, would not be his conduct?

That the end sanctifies the means, or that it is lawful to do evil that good may come, though generally rejected as a principle of action by writers and speakers, is, nevertheless, too frequently discernible in the wily policy and skilful tactics of religious parties, to justify the conclusion that it has been effectually cashiered even in the Protestant churches of the present day. How much overreaching, misrepresentation, artifice, intrigue, low cunning, or bold assertion of falsehood, do not Christian sects still practise towards one another, in order to promote their respective favourite selfish objects, schemes and institutions? To win proselytes, to get money, to build up churches and colleges, or to carry any measure which they deem important or useful?

Christian doctrine requires a man to forgive injuries, and never to avenge his wrongs. And yet how few Christian men act up to the precept? Are they not frequently as sensitive to insult, as jealous of their honour, as prone to vindictive wrath, and as clamorous for satisfaction as other men? Is this worldly antichristian spirit duly reprehended by the bishop and church session?

War is another of the antichristian practices still countenanced by nearly the whole of Christendom.

And yet, when the nations shall become truly Christian, they will learn war no more.

But waiving all further specification, I make one general remark in the way of palliation, and as the best apology or excuse which the nature of the case seems to suggest or to admit of, namely: Practices, customs, habits, usages—which are perfectly antichristian—may be long sustained by the great Christian public, while individuals, who indulge in such practices or conform to such usages, may nevertheless be honest Christians. As, for example, religious persecution, the slave trade, ecclesiastical establishments, all arbitrary abuse of power, intemperance as created and fostered by the occasional use of ardent spirits, are eminently antichristian. Still, individuals in every age have been chargeable with a participation in these general sins, without being therefore destitute of Christian principle. So long as these times of ignorance were winked at, individuals were comparatively innocent. Men contract guilt by committing such sins after they have been duly exposed, acknowledged and condemned. Thus, *now*, it is highly criminal to engage in the slave trade, because its sinfulness is universally admitted. The plea of ignorance can no longer avail. It is criminal *now* to use ardent spirits for the same reason. And whenever war shall be denounced as antichristian by the general voice of Christendom, it will be held criminal for any individual Christian to become a soldier in any army or for any purpose. The Quakers already act upon this principle.

I utterly reject the common maxim that men under-

stand their duty well enough, and that the preacher has nothing to do but to persuade them to perform it. Neither the present speaker, nor any one of his reverend or lay hearers, can reasonably pretend to this perfection of knowledge. A thousand practical heresies are current among us and throughout the world, which are infinitely more pernicious than any philosophical or metaphysical or speculative heresies whatever. And yet the latter find no favour or toleration from our spiritual courts, while the former abound unnoticed and uncondemned. The terms *faith*, *doctrine* and *heresy*, by the way, as used in the New Testament, mean something very different from what they are often made to import in polemical treatises and by ecclesiastical bodies.

Now I admit that we all know a great deal more than we perform; and that we preach better than we practise. But even agreeably to the hitherto universally acknowledged and received standard of Christian morals, it may be doubted whether ministers are not tempted, from some cause or other, to pass too lightly over the whole ground; and to withhold much that ought to be communicated and enforced. Hence I am led to consider this part of my subject under another aspect.

It is a comparatively easy task for a preacher of the gospel to discuss, explain and defend the peculiar tenets and usages of his own particular church; and yet to "omit the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith." He may be the able, zealous, energetic, uncompromising advocate of orthodoxy, according to the creed acknowledged by himself and his

hearers; he may declaim against doctrinal error and heresy with admirable skill and effect; he may be esteemed and lauded as a profound theologian, and as an eloquent, accomplished and powerful pulpit orator; and yet studiously and adroitly avoid those delicate, ticklish, every-day duties which bear directly upon the business and transactions of ordinary life:—The notice of which might alarm and offend his sensitive and self-satisfied auditors. A people may be proud of orthodoxy; proud of their evangelical church; proud of their intellectual and gifted pastor; who would nevertheless resent the slightest reprehension of their habitual practices and indulgences.

Hence there frequently obtains a kind of tacit or implied compact or compromise, in regard to these matters, between the people and their pastor. He may preach as rigid a system of doctrinal opinions as he pleases; he may denounce and anathematize all other churches, sects and parties, without let or hindrance; he may dogmatize and argue, and ring changes upon his "drum ecclesiastic" to his heart's content; but, then, he must not disturb their week-day and out-of-church concerns, or presume to scrutinize their daily walk and conversation, or to bring home any of those fearful truths which might create a sensation, or occasion some unpleasant twinges of conscience, or awaken the slumbering inner man until the whole fabric of soul and body should tremble and writhe under the overwhelming conviction that they are still "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." They expect him to be

tender, or charitable, as they express it, to their frailties and infirmities; or, in other words, to wink at and overlook their worldly entanglements and criminal vanities, so long as they maintain a decent exterior and a fair moral reputation among their peers. Such a minister may be regarded as the champion of his church; as the *great* doctor among his brethren; as the very lion of orthodoxy; and be everywhere praised as the Paul of his generation, who is "earnestly contending for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."

I mean not to usurp the office of censor general on the present occasion. Much less do I mean to reprove the respected fathers and brethren before whom I speak; for of their practice I know nothing which is not worthy of hearty approbation. Nothing therefore that I have already uttered or am yet to say can be designed for personal application. *Qui capit, ille facit.* Every individual must judge for himself. With this disclaimer, I proceed.

There are good men who are constitutionally timid and infirm of purpose—who cannot muster resolution or acquire faith enough to do all that is required at their hands. Such were Eli and Jonah. Alas, how grievously did they suffer for their neglect of known duty! Such men demand our prayers and our sympathy.

That species of Christian courage and intrepidity which never shrinks from the most painful and perilous service, and which never shuns to declare all the counsel of God, is as much needed in this age of com-

parative tranquillity and conventional propriety as it ever was in the most fanatical and troublous times. And it is more needed where wealth and learning and refinement and fashion abound, and shed a dazzling lustre over the worst traits of human depravity, than in less distinguished and more unpolished places. Bible heroes may still serve as our model. Their moral daring is called for, not merely before European courts and lords and potentates, but before the great men of our own simple Republic.

Does it not sometimes happen that a clergyman will rebuke and admonish a poor man — a powerless man — an humble uninfluential man who may have offended; while yet he would spare an equally criminal transgressor if found in a higher sphere? Are there not time-servers and respecters of persons now and in our own country, as there were formerly and in every other country? Is every minister ready now to approach the greatest or richest man in his congregation, and deal with him honestly, as Nathan did with David, and say to him, "Thou art the man?" Or as John the Baptist did with the murderous profligate Herod, and tell him plainly, that it is not lawful to retain the wages of iniquity, or to indulge in this or that vice or course of dishonesty or dissipation? Does he "reason of righteousness, temperance and judgment to come," before every unprincipled Felix? Or endeavour to convert to the pure faith of the gospel every lordly Agrippa, without fear, favour or affection, and without regard to personal consequences? As did the undaunted and heroic Paul?

Such a man is needed in every congregation, and more especially in our cities and larger towns. And though he may not "buy golden opinions from all sorts of people," he will assuredly win a crown of unfading glory, if not of martyrdom, for his fidelity. He may be driven from his post into the savage wilderness—as the apostolic Edwards was driven from Northampton, because he chose to obey God rather than to deceive and flatter and obey great men. And what then? Will he be a loser? Was Edwards a loser by his inflexible integrity? Upon whom has his mantle fallen?

I pass to another branch of my subject, or rather to another series of topics suggested by the occasion.

The visible catholic or universal church under the gospel, consists of all those throughout the world, who profess the true religion, together with their children.

It would seem from the whole scope and tenor of divine revelation, that the true worshippers of Jehovah should harmonize in faith and in affection. This was expected of the Israelites under the Mosaic dispensation. It was demanded of believers under the New Testament dispensation. No precept is more frequently inculcated, or more amply illustrated, or more authoritatively enforced by our Saviour himself, than that the *brethren*, his disciples and followers, should love one another. That they should call no man Rabbi, or master, or father: and that they should consider all who were not against him, as for him.

Among the first converts to the gospel, after the resurrection of their Lord and the signal outpouring

of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, we find the spirit of charity and concord actuating every heart and beaming from every eye. "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart, and of one soul: neither said any of them, that ought of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had all things common." Here we behold the genuine fruits of gospel faith — the infallible evidences of spiritual regeneration—which none could mistake or counterfeit. What Christians then were, they ought still to be. They were of one heart, and of one soul. They walked together in peace and unity because "they saw eye to eye" — because "they were agreed." Agreed, namely, in heart, in temper, in purpose, in principle, in one grand aim and object and pursuit—not in all the circumstantials and forms of worship, or in all the opinions which arise on the subject of religion. For in regard to the latter, the apostles themselves did not agree, as we soon discover. Even "Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation" with certain brethren from Judea about circumcision. And presently, Paul and Barnabas themselves differed about taking Mark as a fellow-missionary on a visit to the new converts in sundry cities. "And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus." Again, "when Peter was come to Antioch, I [Paul] withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed." Here, let it be observed, that Paul withstood Peter to the *face*, like an honest man and a good Christian. He

did not abuse and slander and traduce and mangle and murder his character and reputation behind his back. He was manly and generous and aboveboard in his censures and rebukes; and scorned to play the insidious, cowardly, sneaking part of a whisperer and backbiter and talebearer. This may serve as a goodly lesson for ministers of different sects, and of the same persuasion, in their official and social intercourse with one another.

The best men have their infirmities. And from the specimens just cited, it is evident that the followers of Christ may differ greatly and warmly about many secondary and unessential points, and be so united in sentiment and affection, as still to constitute one harmonious brotherhood. This is all that can be hoped for, probably, in the present imperfect state of trial, temptation, ignorance and prejudice. But this much of union —this strong bond of charity, reaching every heart and joining together all the faithful, as the branches are united to the vine—we have a right to anticipate. And all this would have been realized from the beginning to this day, had the dying commands of the Master been duly honoured. But how soon did Christians betray their eagerness to go astray from the right paths, and to violate the new and great commandment which required them to love one another, and to bear no other name than that of Christ?

We behold the seeds and evidences of this strange perverseness and bigotry and uncharitableness and pride of opinion, revealed in the Acts, and more especially in the Epistles, of the apostles themselves. Jealous dis-

sensions and distinctions soon prevailed between the Jewish and Gentile converts. These again enlisted under divers leaders and favourite preachers; and were designated as being of Paul, or of Apollos, or of Cephas, or of Christ. It is true, every tendency to divisions, and to the assumption of party appellations, was promptly checked and condemned by Paul and the other apostles. Still, the spirit of disunion grew stronger and stronger, until, under various influences and admixtures from the schools of pagan philosophy and the temples of pagan idolatry, the Christian church exhibited the deplorable spectacle of a great family rent into a multitude of hostile, angry, rival, conflicting factions: each claiming the highest apostolical authority for every procedure, and yielding nothing to the reason, the conscience, or the weakness of any dissident or heterodox brother of a different school. So rapid was the march of this antichristian spirit, that, long before the apostles had ceased to labour, sects and parties, furious and arrogant, were everywhere to be found. The evil, of course, increased after their departure; and was by no means extinguished by the storms of persecution which burst upon the defenceless Christian under the Roman Neros; nor was it consumed by the ten thousand fires which lighted the sainted martyr through the dark valley and up to the throne of Immanuel's glory.

"For the time will come, (said the Apostle,) when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears." I need not stop to tell you how soon and

how fearfully this prediction was fulfilled; nor expatiate on the pitiable aspect and deplorable condition of Christendom when overrun with error, heresy, and all manner of human inventions. It is sufficient for the object which I have in view to know the fact, that, for many centuries past, the church of Christ has been divided into sects and parties; and that it now exists under various distinct forms of ecclesiastical organization. Whatever may have been the direct or remote causes of this unhappy result—such is the present state of the great Christian community. Divisions exist—different churches exist—and many of them differ widely from each other. Uniformity in matters of belief, in the modes and forms of public worship, in discipline, in church government, is scarcely to be expected or hoped for, within any assignable period: if, indeed, such a felicitous consummation be not altogether visionary and unattainable.

We are to act then, as best we can, according to existing circumstances. And the question obviously occurs—how is any particular church to discharge her own duty within her acknowledged sphere of enterprise, in behalf of perishing souls, and towards her sister churches?

All ministers of the gospel may now be regarded as sustaining a twofold character and relation. First, as heralds of salvation, duly commissioned to preach the gospel to sinners: and secondly, as the officers and advocates of the particular church to which they belong. Thus, the Episcopalian, the Independent, the Presby-

terian, the Methodist—while they severally break the bread of life and unfold the mysteries of divine revelation in all honesty and godly simplicity—feel it to be their duty also to inculcate and defend their own respective tenets and ecclesiastical polity. These two distinct classes of duty are often so mixed up and confounded, as to occasion bitter controversies, lamentable breaches of charity, and the most egregious mistakes about the essential characteristics of genuine piety.

1. The several churches or denominations differ, in the first place, about church government. Here, indeed, there is ample scope for diversity of opinion, and for the exercise of reason, judgment, and a sound discretion—because the New Testament does not *prescribe* any ecclesiastical constitution or precise form of church government. But, as no community, civil or religious, can flourish or long exist, without a regular government, so the duty of obedience to both civil and spiritual authority is most clearly and positively enjoined upon all men under the light of the gospel in every age. The necessity of some kind of government, however, is one thing: the *form* is a very different affair. Had the form of church government been deemed indispensable, as part and parcel of the Christian system, it cannot be doubted that its divine Author would have given the most explicit and definite instructions upon the subject. No such specific directions are recorded. It appears to have been left to the discretion and wisdom of the apostles and their coadjutors to adopt such rules and to institute such a form of government for the infant

churches, as they judged expedient in the then state of the world. It is not intimated that the peculiar church organization, established by the apostles, was to be of universal and perpetual obligation. If, indeed, the apostles had declared that they acted in this matter by divine inspiration, and that their system was to be permanent and unalterable—and if we could ascertain what their system was—then the question would be at rest. There would be no uncertainty, and no ground for controversy. In the absence however of all positive precept, it is needless to search the imperfect and mutilated records of antiquity in order to ascertain what constitution or system the apostles actually did sanction: because, if it could be clearly demonstrated that they established either Presbytery or Episcopacy, for example, it would not thence follow that the Christian church in all ages and countries must conform to the same usage. If they were permitted to exercise their own judgment in the government and discipline of the church, the same liberty remained with their successors. The *de jure divino* claims therefore which some churches prefer, to be exclusively apostolical and scriptural in their constitutional organization, would seem to be unreasonable and groundless.

The time has been when the champions of monarchy pleaded Scripture in behalf of their favourite system; and strenuously argued that the king, the Lord's anointed, was not only the sole legitimate head of a Christian nation, but that he was entitled to the passive obedience of all his subjects. Christ and the apostles enjoined

subjection to the "higher powers"—to pagan emperors and their tyrannical viceroys—"for there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God." And we are exhorted to make supplications "for kings and for all that are in authority." But, at the present day, such precepts will not be urged in behoof of the divine right of kings, or to sustain the oppressions and extravagancies of royalty. The argument from apostolic precept and practice is as cogent and conclusive in favour of monarchy, as it is in favour of the primitive ecclesiastical government — whatever that may have been. If Christian men can exercise Christian charity towards each other, though living under divers forms of civil government, from the most rigorous despotism to the purest democracy; why may they not cherish the same kindly sentiment, though living under different forms of church government?

The Episcopal, the Presbyterian, and the Independent or Congregational forms, under various modifications, are adopted by the great body of Christians; and they certainly differ widely from one another. But may not a man be a good Christian and a faithful minister of the gospel under each or either? Shall we then reject him, or denounce him, or unchurch him? I mean not to arraign the practice of any, or to decide upon their several merits and pretensions. To their own Master they stand or fall. There have been, and still are, individuals among each of these grand divisions, who sturdily maintained the *divine right* of their respective

church constitutions. Others are content to defend their church upon different principles.

Presbyterians believe that they have at least as clear a warrant from Scripture and apostolic usage for their form, as either the Episcopalians or Independents. And if Scripture and the primitive practice of Christians be appealed to as the sole rule and standard to determine the question, they never shrink from the issue. If, however, neither Scripture nor apostolic institution be regarded as decisive—and if they feel at liberty to defend their system upon those general principles of expediency and propriety already suggested; they are at no loss for reasons and arguments to sustain their cause and to justify their preference. It is desirable, certainly, that every Presbyterian should be made acquainted with the theory, principles, and advantages of the Presbyterian form of church government. Just as it is desirable that every American citizen should be well informed concerning the constitution, laws and policy of his country. Not that this knowledge is absolutely essential in either case to constitute a sincere Christian. But as every man owes allegiance, fealty, obedience, duty, to the civil government which protects him, and to the church which provides for his spiritual wants, and which guides his steps onward and upward towards the heavenly Canaan, it is difficult to conceive that he can be a very exemplary and useful citizen or Christian while ignorant of his relations and obligations in so large a province or department of active service.

A Presbyterian Bishop ought then to instruct his

Presbyterian flock upon the subject of Presbyterian church government. He ought to show them that church government, like civil government and parental government, is a divine institution; necessary to the very existence of the church, and to the well-being of every society great and small; and therefore, that obedience to such church government as they may have voluntarily preferred, is as much a duty as obedience to parents or civil magistrates. He ought to show them that the Presbyterian system is scriptural—that is, not only not contrary to Scripture, but as strictly in accordance with apostolic usage as could reasonably be desired; and that, on this score, no other denomination can boast of precedence or advantage. That it is congenial with the tenor, spirit, and benevolent character of the entire Christian Scriptures—eminently auspicious to evangelical truth and purity—harmonizing exactly with the civil government and free institutions of our own happy country—and that it is in truth as perfect a model of a pure democracy or representative republic as can be found in the world.* Should he be called to preach an occasional sermon to a people or congregation, not Presbyterian in government, he ought to say nothing on the subject. He ought then neither to laud his own nor to censure any other. Just as he would abstain from

* The author spoke, of course, as a Presbyterian. The advocates of other forms or systems may be equally satisfied with their own in these respects; and may sustain them upon similar or better grounds. He questions not their sincerity, their judgment, or their piety—much less their right of opinion and choice.

inculcating republicanism or depreciating monarchy in Austria, Britain or Russia.

A man may, however, be a rigid Presbyterian, and yet be but a sorry Christian. He may be a thorough Christian and no Presbyterian. And we venture, with all humility, and with becoming deference to superior wisdom and knowledge, to assert, at least to hope, that it is possible for a man to be a conscientious, enlightened, judicious, liberal, charitable, laborious, self-denying Presbyterian Bishop, and at the same time maintain the character and discharge the duties of a Christian minister and a Christian citizen as completely as ever did the most devoted apostle. Or as do any of our equally conscientious Episcopal, Methodist, Congregational or Baptist brethren.

2. In the second place: Much diversity of sentiment and practice obtains about the rights, forms and ceremonies of public worship. Here, again, we find nothing prescribed in the New Testament. Under the Jewish economy, these were deemed essential; and they are so minutely described that none could possibly mistake their character. The Christian dispensation is, in its whole exterior, a perfect contrast to the Mosaic or ancient Jewish system. No external pomp or display, no expensive preparations or onerous observances are demanded in the Christian worship. All is simple, easy, cheap and spiritual.

Baptism and the Lord's Supper are the only positive institutions which can be adduced as exceptions to the rule. Protestants acknowledge no others. And even

these are not enjoined with any particular specification as to time, place, form and manner—like the Mosaic ritual. The only controversy among Protestants (except the Lutheran peculiarity about the Eucharist,) is limited to the form and subjects of baptism. Presbyterians recognize the validity of baptism, whatever may be the form of its administration: and they admit to this ordinance the children of believers as well as adult converts. Whether right or wrong, such is their doctrine and practice. They concede to others the right of judging for themselves, and they claim the same privilege. They ought to differ in charity: and never to upbraid or condemn those who cannot in conscience accord with them in these particulars.

3. In the third place: Christians have adopted creeds, confessions, or articles of doctrinal belief, which differ from one another. Here also, it may be observed, that no system of opinions or series of propositions distinctly enunciated, is enjoined in Scripture as the object of faith or as essential to salvation. The faith spoken of in the gospel has respect to an individual, to the Messiah, Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Saviour of sinners. And it implies obedience to all his commandments and instructions. The term *doctrine*, in the New Testament, does not mean a speculative opinion, but a practical precept or principle. Every man, with the Bible in his hands, is at liberty to interpret the divine will as therein exhibited, according to his own best judgment. This privilege is conceded to him by the gospel and by the common consent of Protestants. Neither his reason nor

his conscience ought to be enslaved, or subjected to the arbitrary dictation of any human power or judicatory whatever. He may voluntarily adopt the creed or confession of any church; and then he is bound in conscience to adhere to it, so long as he sustains the relation implied and created by such a connection.

Protestants intended that the Bible alone should be their paramount rule of faith and practice. In subordination to this principle and with its explicit recognition, they soon found it necessary or expedient to prepare certain compendious formularies, exhibiting the most prominent articles of their scriptural belief; in order to avoid the misconstruction of their enemies, and to maintain harmony and concert among themselves. Whether they acted wisely or unwisely, is not the matter of my present inquiry. It would not be very charitable or discreet to condemn their conduct in this particular, until it be shown that any sect or denomination of Christians has been able to get along without a creed of some sort, expressed or well understood. Those, at this day, who have no written or printed creeds, or who profess to make the Bible their only guide and standard, do nevertheless impose their own peculiar interpretations and translations upon their disciples: and they all have some formal test of qualification for church membership. We have yet to learn whether the Bible, simply and exclusively, and agreeably to each individual's own construction of its import, can be made the sole bond of union, communion, and church membership among any set of Christians.

I am as staunch an advocate for the all-sufficiency of the Bible, without note or comment, and for the unrestricted liberty of private interpretation, as any *Bible Christian*, so called, in our country or in the world, can be. I would send the Bible, and give the Bible, to every family and to every individual upon the face of the earth. I would send it abroad without creeds; and where no living teacher or expositor could be found. I would exhort all men everywhere to search the Scriptures diligently and prayerfully: and never to yield assent to the dogmas of any preacher, or of any school, or of any ecclesiastical authority, which are not clearly supported by Holy Writ. Suppose all creeds, confessions, articles and forms were at once annihilated; and that nothing remained but the Bible and the Ministry. How should we judge of the preacher's doctrine? Undoubtedly, by an appeal to the Bible. And do we not judge the preacher now—every sermon, every theological treatise, every existing creed, every directory of worship—by the same unerring standard? Is any man's liberty infringed or impaired by his voluntary approval of a "form of sound words," which he verily believes to be taught in the Bible?

But, it will be objected, the evil consists in the bias given to childhood and early youth in favour of a particular system, before the party can exercise his own understanding upon the subject. He is blindly and insensibly trained in the nursery, and by parents and ministers, to the adoption of opinions which he never afterwards thinks of investigating. They become a part of his

nature—of his intellectual and religious nature—and it is vain afterwards to attempt to convince him of error or to divest him of his shackles. There is weight in the objection. At least, it is specious and imposing. Bring it however to the test of experiment. Let us see. A parent objects to creeds, catechisms, and all manner of religious instruction at school or church, lest his child should be prejudiced or misguided. He must then either teach his child himself, or suffer him to grow up utterly ignorant and careless about religion. If he should himself become the teacher, he will of course inculcate his own religious sentiments. And if he should use the Bible as his text-book, he will impart his own views of its doctrines and contents; and thus will be riveting upon the mind and heart of his child as substantive and as sectarian a creed as Calvin, Laud, Socinus or Fox could have devised. And one article of this parental creed will be, a thorough contempt of all creeds. The child, when a man, will fancy himself freed from vulgar prejudice — from the dominion of priestcraft — from bigotry, superstition, and all arbitrary prescriptive laws, rules and guides. He is liberal, and charitable, and wondrously catholic, in his own estimation. And he gives ample demonstrations of both modesty and charity, in boldly denouncing creeds, and in thundering forth anathemas against all who are silly enough to adopt them.

If, on the other hand, the child be left to his own wayward fancies, without religious check or instruction, until he arrives at mature age; he will enter upon the theatre

of action, a skeptic, an infidel, a heathen—perhaps a reviler of the Bible and a scoffer at all sacred institutions—a monster, it may be, in human shape—a hopeful candidate for the gallows—and a fit companion for the blaspheming rebellious spirits shut up in the dark prisons of despair, "where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

In these remarks, I have no reference to any existing sect, church or party; nor to any living or known individuals. I have made a supposition, and have pointed out the inconsistencies, contradictions and miseries which it involves.

I admit that a man has a right to reject every religious creed in the world—except the Bible. But, then, such a man has no right to impose his mode of understanding the Bible upon any human being. He may repudiate creeds, in the exercise of his own Christian liberty, and upon his own responsibility. But he is expected to concede to others the privilege of adhering to creeds if they choose. When I meet with a man who professes to own no creed but the Bible, I blame him not. I do not charge him with error. I hold no argument with him on the subject. I esteem him not the less a Christian on that account. I judge of his Christian profession by another standard—by his habitual temper, walk and conversation—by his humble, consistent, upright, charitable bearing—by the fruits of the Spirit, which cannot be easily counterfeited. The Bible is a good creed. There can be no better. Let him study it, pray over it, and drink deeply into its heavenly spirit. I will not

pester him about other creeds, nor seek to proselyte him to my own church or party. I give him my hand and my heart; and cheerfully acknowledge him as a brother in Christ.

But should a *No Creed Man* insist upon my subscribing to his *no creed*—should he, while he claims exemption from all human authority, and professes to go to the Bible alone for his religious principles, require me to pursue the same course and to arrive at precisely the same conclusions with himself—should he, in short, demand of me any test, whether doctrinal or ceremonial, in order to Christian fellowship with him or his church; I should beg to remind him that the Pope is still at Rome, and that in this portion of North America we happen to enjoy liberty of conscience. I ask of him neither more nor less than I freely yield. Thus it is, that I understand the civil constitution of my country, and the behests of Christian charity. I dictate to no man. I suffer no man to dictate to me. I fearlessly appeal to the Bible as my only standard of faith and practice. And if I find a brief exhibition of the leading facts and doctrines of the Bible, adopted by a class or society of Christians, with whom I may think it desirable and profitable to be connected:—do I act inconsistently or unworthily in becoming a member of such an association by subscribing to its rules? Is there a church on earth—is there a society or company of any description or for any purpose—which does not impose a *creed* of some kind upon its members? The shortest creed that I at present recollect, is the one imposed

on the members of Temperance Societies. They must *believe* that the moderate use of spirituous liquors is injurious and criminal: and they promise not to drink, manufacture, give or vend them, so long as they hold this *creed* on the subject. Most religious creeds are somewhat longer: and so are the creeds of literary and philosophical societies, as well as those of banking, insurance, and railroad companies. The most intolerant and contradictory creeds, are party political creeds: and these are swallowed every day in folios, by those who would nauseate a single page if tinctured with a drop of religious doctrine. And I believe the creeds of professed skeptics are not remarkable either for their brevity, their simplicity, their perspicuity, or their freedom from arrogant assumption or authoritative dictation or arbitrary requirement.

I do not present myself before you this day as the champion of creeds. I heartily wish that they could be dispensed with, and that Christians would be content with the Bible—that they would suffer one another to interpret it as best they can, and agree to differ in opinions as they do in features, without indulging one unkindly or uncharitable sentiment. But as I have never yet discovered the church or the individual thus charitably constituted or disposed—as I happen to belong to a body of Christians possessing a creed; having been born and bred a Presbyterian, (this may have been my misfortune, it could not have been my fault;) and having lived to this good day a contented, though not, I trust, a bigoted Presbyterian; and expecting to die a Presbyte-

rian, and in charity, I hope, with all men—I have said thus much, and I shall add a little more, on the subject of creeds, partly in self-defence, and chiefly to exhibit our humble claims to the kindly forbearance and courteous treatment of other equally charitable Christians.

I state our case thus. All Christian churches, sects and parties, large and small, throughout the world, without one exception, have in fact *creeds*, written or unwritten. They all have rules and regulations of some kind. And they all demand of every individual whom they admit into their respective bodies, some profession, declaration, acknowledgment or promise, or some visible token or action or ritual observance—a *Shibboleth*, in a word, which, whatever may be its length, form or significancy, is, to all intents and purposes, a *creed*. The principle involved is the same whether the creed be an inch or a thousand leagues in extent. Presbyterians, then, are placed on the same footing, so far as creeds are concerned, with all other Christians—not excepting the *no Creed's men* themselves, as we have shown. The only further question worth investigating is, whether their creed be as sound as that of their sister, or rival, or hostile churches? This point is easily settled.

All the creeds which were adopted by the earliest Protestant Churches, in the days of Luther or soon after his decease, speak the same language and teach the same doctrines. The only difference of opinion worthy of notice respected the Eucharist or Lord's Supper. Luther and the churches known by his name held the doctrine of consubstantiation. Calvin and the other reformed

churches rejected it, as they did transubstantiation. They entirely harmonized in nearly all those doctrines which have, since the days of Arminius, caused so much angry controversy and metaphysical speculation among divines and philosophers. Upon most of these points, Luther was as strictly *Calvinistic* as Calvin himself. Upon the points, now so generally stigmatized as Calvinistic, all were agreed; or they agreed to differ in charity.* The creeds, confessions and articles of the reformed German, Swiss, French, Genevese, English, Dutch and Scottish churches, were all equally Calvinistic, in the only sense in which Calvinism has been justly predicated of any creed. And they are as Calvinistic now as they ever were. So far then as the authorized creeds of these several churches speak upon the doctrines

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* Had Luther and Calvin agreed upon the subjects of the Eucharist and Church Government, it is manifest that all their other differences might have been easily adjusted, so as to have secured their friendly co-operation in the common cause of Protestantism. The fundamental doctrine of justification by faith alone was equally maintained by both. Nor was it rejected by Arminius, as some modern authors would insinuate. "So sound, indeed, are the Arminians with respect to the doctrine of justification, a doctrine so important and essential in the opinion of Luther, that he scrupled not to call it 'Articulus ecclesiæ stantis vel cadentis;' that those who look into the writings of Arminius may be disposed to suspect him of having even exceeded Calvin in orthodoxy. It is certain, at least, that he declares his willingness to subscribe to everything that Calvin has written on that leading subject of Christianity, in the third book of his Institutes. And with this declaration, the tenor of his writings invariably corresponds." And yet the Bishop of Lincoln, in a work lately published against Calvinism, represents the doctrine of justification by faith as a peculiarity of Calvinism!

usually denominated Calvinistic, they would be readily embraced by the most rigid Calvinists of any school. Presbyterians therefore are no more chargeable with the sin of Calvinism than many other honoured and honourable churches.

The term, indeed, ought never to have been introduced into our theological vocabulary. *Calvinism* is as ancient as the primitive fathers: and St. Augustine as ably expounded and defended the system as did the Genevese reformer himself. Nor does any man adhere to the Calvinistic tenets at the present day, because they were inculcated by either Augustine or Calvin, or by any ecclesiastical council or synod; but simply and solely because he believes them to be taught in the Bible, or fairly deducible from a rational philosophy. They may be erroneous, extravagant, absurd, or incomprehensible—still, we must in charity admit that they may be honestly received and piously cherished. And if charitably maintained, no man has a right to pass sentence of condemnation upon their advocates. The terms *Calvin, Calvinism, Calvinistic,* are not found in our Confession of Faith; nor do they especially or exclusively befit our theological system.

It is unfortunate that any appellation, derived from a distinguished Christian doctor or divine, should ever have been fastened upon any portion of the great Christian family. The apostles condemned all such profane applications or appropriations in their day—as their divine Master had done before them. It is still more unfortunate when the name, from any circumstance or

association, can be rendered odious and repulsive. Thus has it fared with Calvin. He was a persecutor. He burnt Servetus. *Ergo,* Calvinism must be diabolical: and all Calvinists must be bigots and persecutors. Such is the logic in current use. And the poor Calvinist must be content to be buffeted and ridiculed and abhorred, because he happens to think on some abstruse points of metaphysical theology as did one John Calvin in the sixteenth century; and because the said Calvin enacted a part in a certain tragedy which no enlightend sincere Christian upon earth would countenance in the nineteenth century—though expressly approved and highly lauded by Bucer, Beza, the *gentle* Melancthon, and all their coadjutors at the time; and though the horrible practice of persecuting heretics universally prevailed, and continued unabated many years after their death. It was the besetting sin of the age. Those were times of ignorance—like our own in regard to the slave trade and intemperance—which God winked at. But now he commandeth all men everywhere to repent of this iniquity. A command which we have not yet learned to obey.

The fact that Calvin persecuted Servetus has long been, and continues to be, the most popular argument against Calvinism. Now this argument should either prove a great deal more, or be directed against a totally different doctrine. It should go to the condemnation of his whole system, or only of the particular doctrine which led to the fatal catastrophe. Whereas, his entire system has never been rejected on this ground by any

sect: and the particular doctrine about which he contended with Servetus, is still the doctrine of nearly the whole of Christendom. Servetus was condemned and executed for blaspheming the Holy Trinity, by the public council or senate, agreeably to the laws of Geneva. Or, if you please, Calvin condemned and burned Servetus, because he disbelieved the doctrine of the Trinity. And yet, who ever thinks of depreciating or ridiculing or rejecting the doctrine of the Trinity, because Calvin persecuted Servetus on its behalf? Why then seek to identify with this detestable persecuting spirit, other tenets of Calvin which had no more to do with the transaction than his Astronomical or Mathematical principles? The grand error of Calvin was, a belief in the lawfulness of punishing or persecuting heretics. This was the only *Calvinistic doctrine* which caused the death of Servetus. And this has been the doctrine of all religious persecutors of every sect in every age and country.*

If all the Christian churches and denominations of the present day are held amenable at the bar of public opinion for the errors maintained and for the enormities perpetrated by their Christian predecessors; Presbyterians will not shrink from their full measure of this

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* It will be perceived that the case of Calvin has been stated agreeably to the prevalent belief among his enemies. The speaker's object was not to justify or defend Calvin, but to meet the precise objection which is so triumphantly paraded on all occasions against his system—upon the assumption that he procured the death of Servetus.

responsibility. Nor do they dread any historical scrutiny or comparisons which may be instituted. In Great Britain, during the entire reign of the Stuarts, they suffered the most unrelenting persecution. That they occasionally retaliated upon their oppressors with tremendous fury; and that they sometimes persecuted, in the worst sense of the term, will not be denied. *But upon the soil of America, they have never persecuted a solitary individual.* This negative virtue may, however, have been the result of a mere want of power rather than of inclination. I speak of facts, not of motives. I am aware that they are often confounded with the worthy Puritans of New England; and hence made to share largely in the obloquy which has, with or without reason, been so profusely heaped upon the latter by no very impartial judges. But this is a mistake. Presbyterians were, either by their own choice or by the policy of government, as effectually excluded from the early settlements of the Pilgrim Fathers, as were Jews, Quakers and Papists. Nor did a single Presbyterian minister find a *home* in all New England, until about the year 1719—when a few Irish families, with their pastor, were permitted or induced to settle at Londonderry in New Hampshire. And at this day, there are only about twenty Presbyterian clergymen in the six New England States. I do not say that Presbyterians were ever persecuted in New England, or that any oppressive laws were enacted expressly against them. All I mean to assert is, that

they never attained the slightest degree of political influence in any part of that country, and consequently could never have persecuted other sects—as many affirm.*

They did not persecute the Roman Catholics in Maryland; as has been often proclaimed, and as multitudes still ignorantly believe. And for the best of all reasons: they never possessed the power of persecution in Maryland. They were themselves but barely tolerated in Maryland before the late Revolution. And even this precarious toleration was extorted from public opinion and never sanctioned by law, and was always attended with many vexations. It was under the government of England, and by the introduction of English laws, civil and ecclesiastical, that the Roman Catholics were deprived of the religious privileges originally guarantied by royal charter to Lord Baltimore.

I have carefully traced the progress of Presbyterianism throughout the British Provinces of America down to the epoch of our Revolution. And I defy any man to produce a single case of persecution by Presbyterian authority or influence upon this continent. They were often persecuted, and generally liable to persecution, in New York, Virginia and elsewhere. Nor did they anywhere, within the limits of the Middle and Southern Colonies, enjoy all the rights and franchises of British subjects, by law or charter or courtesy, except in New

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* See Note at the end of this discourse.

Jersey, Pennsylvania and Delaware; and also in Maryland prior to 1688.*

I may add moreover, in this connection, that the Presbyterian clergy were to a man staunch uncompromising Whigs, from the beginning to the close of our revolutionary struggle for liberty and independence. I do not say that they were in principle more tolerant, or in action more patriotic, than other denominations. But I do say, they were not excelled by any in either respect.†

Again, if we may judge of a tree by its fruit—of a man's principles by his practice—of his faith by his works—we may cheerfully submit the cause of Presbyterianism and of Calvinism to this test. The Calvinistic Protestants of France, Switzerland, Germany, Holland, Scotland, England, Ireland, and these United States,

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* In Rhode Island, all religionists were entitled to equal privileges from the beginning: and, of course, Presbyterians might have resided there in peace and security, had they pleased. And throughout New England, before the expiration of the seventeenth century, all vexatious persecution on account of religion had subsided, and a general toleration prevailed.

† The author does not affirm that Presbyterians in this country have never cherished or exhibited a persecuting *spirit*. On this point, men may decide as they please. He affirms that *in fact* they have never persecuted other denominations: and he is willing that this forbearance should be attributed solely to their want of political power. In a lower or milder sense, they may be said to have persecuted one another, in the usual mode, by polemical diatribes, spiritual terrors, and ecclesiastical censures. Beyond this species of domestic annoyance or persecution, they could not go. These however, at worst, are but family quarrels, with which other sects have no concern.

including New England (for the Congregationalists are generally Calvinists,) will not be pronounced by the most determined foes of Calvinism, less moral, less intelligent, less amiable, less charitable, or in any respect more dangerous or unworthy citizens, than their neighbours of a different or more liberal creed.*

Now my single aim in all this rather desultory discussion, has been to show, that Presbyterians are no worse than other Christian communities, whether we regard their creed or their discipline, their history or their morals—and not that they are better. I have been too long in the habit of mingling in social intercourse with good men of divers denominations, and of uniting in the worship of the Great Father and Saviour of all men in different churches, to indulge one unkindly sentiment towards any Christian; or to judge uncharitably of any individual whose conduct accords with the gospel which he professes. I have never made an attempt, or

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* In the above appeal to "the most determined foes of Calvinism," the speaker was probably too confident either in the justice of his cause or in the candour of the tribunal to which he referred: as the following precious specimen may show.

"The Presbyterian clergy are loudest; the most intolerant of all sects, the most tyrannical and ambitious; ready at the word of the lawgiver, if such a word could be now obtained, to put the torch to the pile, and to rekindle in this virgin hemisphere the flames in which their oracle Calvin consumed the poor Servetus, because he could not find in his Euclid the proposition which has demonstrated that three are one, and one is three, nor subscribe to that of Calvin, that magistrates have a right to exterminate all heretics to Calvinistic creed. They pant to re-establish, by law, that holy inquisition, which they can now only infuse into *public opinion.*" [See Jefferson's Correspondence, vol. iv. p. 321, first edition.]

uttered a syllable in public or private, from the pulpit or the academical chair, with a view to gain proselytes from sister churches. I would not, if I could, persuade one Baptist, Methodist or Episcopalian to become Presbyterian. I believe we may be all good Christians in our own several modes: and that we may dwell together in peace and harmony. Why should we not?

But Presbyterian ministers have not only the same right—it is their duty also—to explain and inculcate their own distinctive code and doctrines; as do the ministers of all other persuasions. As Presbyterians, they are bound in conscience to teach Presbyterian principles. Not, indeed, as indispensable to salvation, but as indispensable to the profession of the Presbyterian in contradistinction to every other system. To the perishing sinner, we preach Jesus Christ and him crucified, as the way, the truth and the life—the only name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved. And if he believe with all the heart—with a faith that worketh by love and purifieth the heart and overcometh the world—we assure him of pardon, justification and life everlasting. We do not tell him to believe in any human creed or church in order to be saved or to become a Christian, or to be entitled to baptism and other Christian ordinances and privileges. If, however, he would join the Presbyterian Church, he must at least assent to the usages and discipline of that particular church. If he would become a Presbyterian preacher, he is expected, as an honest man, to adopt *ex animo*, the entire Confession of Faith, agreeably to the natural, obvious, and

primitive import of its perfectly simple and unambiguous phraseology. He has no alternative but either to redeem the pledge solemnly given and ratified by his ordination vows, or to leave with honour and a good conscience, and in charity and peace, the Presbyterian connection. In his ordinary ministrations to a promiscuous assemblage of all classes, ages, sexes, and degrees of intelligence, he may not find it edifying or expedient to enter very profoundly and learnedly into the discussion of every abstruse and perplexing question or position contained in our church book. Indeed, I have never witnessed any instances of this species of indiscretion or rather presumption, except in the case of very young, or very weak, or very ignorant preachers.

"Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" Who can comprehend the entire vastness of his plans and purposes—of his providence and government—of his sovereignty, grace, mercy and justice—in reference to guilty, fallen, responsible man? In whatever form of words, or by whatever propositions, we may choose to express our inadequate ideas upon the momentous relations and overwhelming mysteries involved in such inquiries, we cannot expect to satisfy either our own minds or the minds of others. And yet these subtile, inexplicable, transcendental topics have occasioned an infinite deal of theological controversy and uncharitable warfare and bitter persecution. Here are difficulties as formidable, to say the least, to natural as to revealed religion; as confounding to the Deist as to the Christian; and which,

assuredly, have not yet been encountered by the infidel or the philosopher, by the Universalist or the Arminian, with any more skill or success than by the old fashioned Orthodox Calvinist.

The Calvinistic system, indeed, in reference to the very points at issue between Calvinists and their opponents, has been frequently pronounced the only consistent and rational scheme of faith, by men of the most gigantic vigour and reach of intellect, who have studied the subject simply as a branch of spiritual or mental philosophy. It has been cordially embraced by not a few of the most pious and gifted among the devoted students, critics and expositors of the Holy Scriptures in every age. The celebrated Euler, it is well known, was a thorough conscientious Calvinist. And Sir David Brewster (himself as free from illiberal prejudice and sectarian bias as he is eminent for talent and science,) speaks of him and of Calvinism in the following terms. "Theology was one of his favourite studies, and his doctrines were the most rigid doctrines of Calvinism, the only system of religious truth which a philosopher can maintain."*

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* [See article *Euler*, written by Dr. Brewster, in the Edinburgh Encyclopædia. Vol. viii. p. 817.]

The author does not appeal to the authority of *great names* in order to establish the *truth* of Calvinism. He cites them merely to show that there is nothing in the system so monstrously absurd or repulsive as to expose it *prima facie* to the contempt or ridicule or abhorrence of Philosophy. And that learned, wise, and good men have yielded to it their deliberate assent, after the most profound and patient investigation. To err with such men as Euler and Edwards, cannot be folly or weakness or hypocrisy.

The learned and ingenious Bishop Horsley, in a solemn charge to the clergy of his diocese, exhorted them never to denounce Calvinism until they had diligently studied and thoroughly understood the works of Calvin, lest they should unwittingly calumniate a friendly ally, and dishonour the cause of truth and religion.* To all ignorant noisy impugners of Calvinism, the same judicious counsel may not be less seasonable and appropriate at the present day. Let them condescend to know somewhat of the subject whereof they dogmatize, before they finally condemn. I have never heard a sweeping unqualified denunciation of Calvinism from any man who attached a correct or even intelligible meaning to the term. That sort of thing, vulgarly abused and declaimed against as Calvinism, and charitably fathered upon Presbyterians as their own proper heritage, is as utterly foreign to their sentiments and mode of preaching, as it ever was or can be to those of any other Christian sect.

Presbyterian Calvinism—if we must bear the odium of the ungracious epithet—is not fatalism. It does not destroy or impair the free agency of man, nor the use of

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* Not having at hand the works of Bishop Horsley, and many years having elapsed since he perused them, the author relied on his memory for the substance of the *advice* referred to above. He has since met with the passage, and it is as follows:

"Take special care before you aim your shafts at Calvinism, that you know what is Calvinism, and what is not; that in that mass of doctrine, which it is of late become the fashion to abuse, under the name of Calvinism, you can distinguish with certainty between that part, which is nothing better than Calvinism, and that which belongs to our common Christianity, and the faith of the reformed churches."

means in every stage of his progress from earth to heaven, nor his perfect accountability for all his actions, nor the necessity of good works. It does not convert him into a machine, or treat him as such. It does not represent the Deity as the author of sin, or as in any wise constraining or tempting men to its commission. It does not foster a persecuting, selfish or exclusive spirit. Presbyterians, moreover, are forbidden to slander or unchurch other churches. Their Book commands them to believe nothing—to do nothing—except upon undoubted scriptural authority. It disclaims all support from the secular arm; and condemns, as antichristian, every attempt at uniting church and state. I mention these several items, in passing, that our own people may be reminded of the true genius of our system; and that strangers to its character, if any be present, may not be horrified at the very name of either Calvinism or American Presbyterianism. Let both friends and enemies study our standards before they hastily suspect or rashly censure. And let none deduce from our doctrines, practical consequences or theoretical absurdities, which we do not ourselves acknowledge or countenance.

I venture to assert, that, in no Christian church on earth, is greater liberty allowed to both minister and people to regulate their faith and practice by the pure simple dictates of Scripture than in our own. The Bible is in fact their creed. To it they always recur for direction in every difficulty, and to it alone they appeal for decision in every controversy. So much so,

that our stated pastors seldom refer or even allude to the Confession of Faith in their ordinary ministrations. And this is the first time in the course of my life, that I have had or have made occasion formally to introduce the book, or to discourse of Calvinism or Presbyterianism, before a popular assembly.*

It is the duty of a Presbyterian minister, as it is of every other minister, to adapt his instructions to the wants and capacities of his hearers; to furnish milk to babes, strong meat to men, and as little of metaphysical subtilties to all as possible. The language of Scripture is always safe language: and it is generally the best language upon all recondite and controverted points, when properly cited and aptly applied. And the more he follows the scriptural order and arrangement and manner in his daily or weekly ministrations, the less of arbitrary system and of unskilful interpretation will be apparent. He will be more likely, in this way also, to unfold the whole counsel of God; and to show that, "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Indeed, I see no way in which the work of instruction (and the pastor is a teacher) can be adequately performed, except

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* The author does not mean to justify this neglect of our church standards. He states the usage, so far as his own observation has enabled him to ascertain it. The Presbytery of West Tennessee being present at the delivery of this discourse will account for its mixed character and for some of its peculiar features.

by going through an entire book—a Gospel or an Epistle for example—in regular order from beginning to end.

4. In the fourth place: Some men judge of religion and of religious character, almost exclusively from what is called religious experience.—From internal exercises, emotions, impulses, hopes, fears, joys, terrors, nervous convulsions, or fancied illuminations. Now, of all these, only God and the parties affected can possibly take cognizance. What a man feels or experiences in his own heart may be ground of hope to himself, but is not the kind of evidence which he is required to exhibit to the world of his conversion. Ministers neglect or mistake their duty, when their preaching tends to excite or encourage delusions of this sort.

Great zeal in preaching, praying, exhorting, reproving—in attending upon the external ordinances of the gospel—in frequenting the places of public worship by day and by night—or any loud, visible, noisy, ostentatious display of fervour and devotion, whether by minister or people—cannot be accepted as infallible proof of Christian piety or Christian charity. Nay, martyrdom itself is not always a sure test of truth or even of sincerity. Men have honestly died for error: and they have died to seal with their blood a consistent profession, though against their judgment and conscience. There may be, moreover, much liberality—giving of alms—aiding of charitable institutions—and a variety of benevolent exhibitions—without any genuine love to God or love to man.

There is a fashion in all these matters. And men are prone to follow the fashion in religion as in everything else. In such circumstances, ministers are themselves exceedingly liable to be imposed on by counterfeit professions, even when they have no design to deceive or mislead others. It is difficult to check, turn back, or correct the popular current on this subject. It acquires a strength sometimes, perfectly furious and irresistible. Or the fashion becomes so fixed by long continuance and undisputed custom, that to doubt its propriety would be accounted heretical or profane.

There has ever been a disposition or propensity to merge the whole of religion, or rather the ostensible evidence or test of conversion and Christian character, into one single act, exercise, ceremony, or confession; or into a series of acts of the same species; or into certain periodical observances. Thus, mortifying, painful or expensive penances and sacrifices constitute the religious catholicon of one period or country. Implicit faith in an infallible church will suffice in another. Zeal for orthodoxy is all the rage at a different juncture. Heart exercises, inward spiritual promptings, and all the reveries of mysticism have their day. Then we behold the wild fire of passion in full blast:—Speaking and prophesying in unknown tongues: With all manner of strange, unsightly, unearthly and extravagant distortions of feature, limb and voice. By-and-by, comes the golden age of good deeds, of benevolent enterprise, of money begging and money giving. And the munificent benefactor of the church stands

forth proudly conspicuous and pre-eminent among his peers. By giving a few hundreds from his many thousands, or a few thousands from his hoarded millions, he compromises all other claims upon his purse and his conscience: and while he enjoys, with infinite self-complacency, the incense of human flattery and applause, he expects to merit a high place in the ranks and in the palaces of the New Jerusalem. Others prefer a cheaper mode, keep aloof from charitable associations, take especial care of the main chance, and calmly settle down upon a single initiatory rite, administered with ceremonial precision, as a certain passport to all the privileges and immunities of the church militant upon earth and of the church triumphant in heaven.

But to this specification of human inventions and refuges of lies, there is no end. The faithful watchman upon the walls of Zion will find it no gentle office or easy task to separate the gold from the dross; and to disabuse his flock of the multitudinous errors, evils, and counterfeit substitutes which are ever afloat in the world. Verily, he will never slumber upon a bed of roses, nor be suffered to relax his vigilance or his labours. He is a soldier—a general—always on the battle-field; with a host of unconquered enemies around, and with many insidious spies in the midst of his camp. This is his true position from first to last. His whole life is one continued campaign of painful and most rigorous duty. However victorious and triumphant he may prove to-day, he will lose ground to-morrow, should he remit his accustomed ardour or effort in the smallest degree. He

has engaged in a warfare, and is consecrated to a service, from which God alone can release him.

Having thus discoursed, at much greater length than I intended, upon some of the prominent differences among the several denominations of Protestant Christians, the question recurs: how ought our church to regard and treat other churches?

I answer, in the first place: It would be contrary to the express statutes and pervading spirit of our liberal code, to excommunicate, anathematize or condemn other churches, or to inflict upon them any judicial or formal censure whatever. If we do not like them, we may let them alone. I see no necessity or propriety in ever denouncing them from the pulpit. We cannot enlighten, convince, or benefit the distant or absent members of a heterodox church by preaching against them—much less by abusing them. If we believe them to be in such darkness and error as to endanger their salvation, Christian charity and common humanity should induce us rather to send missionaries to convert them, as we would to Pagans, Jews and Mohammedans. Should a Christian church refuse to acknowledge us as a Christian church, we are not therefore bound to retaliate, and to render evil for evil. We ought rather to suffer wrong, and to leave the issue with God. Christian charity, however, does not require us to admit to the ordinances and privileges of our church, the members of any other church, unless we are satisfied in regard to their faith, character and habitual practice. On this subject, as an independent Christian society, we have a right to exer-

cise our own judgment and discretion in the premises. And while we concede to all other denominations the same right, they can have no just ground of complaint or offence. Thus far, the course of duty and propriety seems pretty plain and obvious.

But, in the second place: How is a particular church or congregation, circumstanced for example as we of this church are in Nashville, to regulate its intercourse with the other churches in the same city? I answer, that in all cases of church fellowship and inter-communion, a perfect reciprocity of kind and friendly offices ought to obtain. Each should admit the other to be in all respects her equal. If we invite her members to commune with us, we ought, when occasion offers, cheerfully to commune with them at her own board. If we accept her invitation, we ought to reciprocate the favour or the courtesy. But if, on the other hand, she should admit us to her communion and refuse to come to ours; or if we should admit them to ours and refuse to go to hers; it is manifest that, after a fair experiment of this left-handed civility, all intercourse between the parties, as churches, must cease and determine.—Unless one party shall be willing to yield to the exclusive pretensions of the other. A concession, which neither Christian charity nor the laws of self-respect can ever demand.

The same general rule is applicable to occasional attendance on the ordinary public worship of the several churches by the people, and to the exchange of pulpits by the clergy—as also to the use of each others' houses on any emergency either for divine service or other pur-

poses—to the recognition of the validity of each others' official acts and ordinances, as baptism, the eucharist, ordination—and, indeed, to the entire subject, in all its details, of neighbourly intercourse and interchange of civilities. If the whole, and each particular, be not on a footing of acknowledged and open-hearted equality and reciprocity, the parties had better cherish the spirit of brotherly kindness and charity by keeping at a respectful distance from each others' holy festivals and holy places. Mutual suspicion, jealousy, irritation and hostility would be the natural and inevitable result of any half-way course or system. In such matters, there must be no concealment, no duplicity, no mental reservations, no affected superiority, no parade of unmeaning liberality, no protecting condescension, none of that fastidious courtly *delicacy* which insinuates or seems to say, "mine is better than thine," and nothing of that lordly *churchism* and somewhat ludicrous bigotry (now indeed rather obsolete, though once a tremendous reality) which boldly proclaims, "my church is the only true church, and your church is no church at all."

We, as Presbyterians, I trust, will never arrogantly claim or covet what we would not cheerfully accord; nor stoop to surrender the smallest iota even of etiquette which would imply, or could be construed to imply, any inferiority on our part, or the acknowledgment of any superiority on the part of others.

None of these remarks are designed to have the slightest bearing on the common social intercourse of families or individuals. Such intercourse must be regu-

lated by the tastes, interests or caprices of the parties themselves. We may visit, and receive the visits of Jews, Pagans, Turks or Mormonites, as may suit our fancy or inclination.

Now should any man conceit that I have betrayed an illiberal, partial or sectarian spirit in any portion of this discourse, I would respectfully beg him to inform us how he would speak of his own church under similar circumstances and in reference to the same points. Would he claim less for his church than I have claimed for mine? Would he concede more to other churches than I have freely conceded to all? Have I not assumed them to be equally honest and conscientious, and equally entitled to all the rights and privileges, temporal and spiritual, which, as religious associations, they may lawfully possess and exercise in this Republic? Am I expected to express a preference for his church, or for any church, over my own? Will he not be satisfied that I leave him unmolested to think as highly of his own church and as humbly of mine as he pleases?

But gladly would I hail the dawn of a better day—of a purer Christian era—when all such idle questions, and verbal controversies, and family quarrels, and jealous rivalries, and ambitious aspirings, shall be forgotten. When celestial charity shall pervade the hearts and the ranks of the Christian soldiery, and all the world be constrained to exclaim: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" When Christian sects will strive, not for the mastery over one another, but for the mastery over their own

evil tempers, and for the palm of glory in self-devotion to the common cause of God and the Saviour.

If charity is ever to have her perfect work in our world, a great revolution is yet to be anticipated. Evidently, the present character of the churches cannot be of long duration. Public opinion will not sustain or tolerate the continued violation of the first principles of the gospel system. Neither sectarian orthodoxy or austerity, nor polemic or doctrinal theology—any more than the trumpery of by-gone ages of darkness, superstition, credulity and cunning—can forever withstand the evidence of truth, or be mistaken for that faith which worketh by *love*, and which enjoins or implies absolute, universal, unreserved, filial obedience to the precepts, institutions, example and instructions of the Lord Jesus Christ. A far more radical reformation in Christian theory and practice is yet to take place, than was effected or dreamed of by Luther and his scholastic compeers. Great and marvellous as was their achievement, they failed, as we have seen, to learn the very alphabet of Christian charity—of that law of love, which irradiates every page of the gospel, and constitutes, as it were, its very soul and essence, and upon which "hang all the law and the prophets." They cherished the ancient Romish heresy, and enacted over again the tragedies in which Saul of Tarsus delighted before his conversion, and verily thought they were doing God service. I have already suggested the proper apology for this strange delusion of the noble reformers and of their age. It proves that *habit* is stronger than principle; or rather

that it subverts and supplants principle altogether, and prevents our seeing for a season the light of truth and the beauty of holiness, though shining upon us like the noon-day sun in all his glorious splendour.

Three hundred years, devoted to the study and teaching of the Bible of truth and charity, have not sufficed to eradicate from Protestant Christendom this one monstrous heresy. Men persecute one another now, not with sword and fire, but with tongue and pen, as heartily as did Luther and Calvin each other and their common enemies. And if the religious periodicals of the day can be relied on, there are divisions in our own church, with party champions at their head, who bandy the epithets of dogmatical controversy and theological virulence, with as much adroitness and with as charitable a temper, as ever did any of their amiable and accomplished predecessors. Verily, it does not become us to magnify the mote in the eye of our good brother, the Pope, till we cast the beam out of our own.

There never was a period when the Presbyterian Church in our country exhibited an aspect, or stood in an attitude or predicament, so critical and perilous as at this moment:—whether we consider its internal convulsions or its external relations and prospects. Threatened with dissolution or schism from agitators and nullifiers within her own bosom—assailed by Christians, politicians, and infidels of almost every sect and school in the land—denounced as bigots and fanatics, as the enemies of civil and religious liberty, as the ambitious aspirants to universal ecclesiastical dominion, as the insidious

plotters and conspirators to effect a union of church and state, with a view to become the lords paramount of both:—how greatly do we need the spirit of wisdom, of meekness, of courage, of prayer, of candour, of mutual forbearance, of union, peace and charity! With us, undoubtedly, the great work of reform must commence at home. The *Achan* of uncharitableness in our own camp must first be dragged to light and consigned to the executioner, before success will crown our efforts or victory attend our banners in battle against the proud army of aliens without and abroad.

But the work must and will be carried on and completed, under the good providence of God, by human agency of some kind. The world is yet to be conquered and evangelized by Christian soldiers and Christian missionaries. But Christendom itself must first be purified and converted to a better faith. And every church must learn her own duty before she will be accepted as an auxiliary or ally by the great Captain of salvation. What part is the Presbyterian Church destined to act in this mighty enterprise?

Eighteen hundred years ago, the command was issued: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." The apostles obeyed this command to the letter. But since their day, what have Christians been doing? Except quarrelling among themselves; and plundering, destroying, oppressing and enslaving every other people within reach of their avarice, their ambition and their cruelty? Is such to be the character of Christians forever? Is the Christian dignitary to

luxuriate in wealth and ease and splendour—is the popular preacher to be caressed and puffed and *starred* throughout a nation—is the devoted, zealous missionary, who ventures across the Mountains or the Ocean, to be accounted a martyr, and to read his praises in a hundred journals as a prodigy of Christian daring and self-denial?—While thousands of our people and of every Christian people are annually encountering all the dangers, privations, diseases, and horrors of every climate and season, of every desert and wilderness, of every sea and ocean and bay and river and coast and island, at the bidding of avarice, and without a murmur?

Here again, is much to unlearn, and still more to be learned. We are to learn that the duty of preaching the gospel, not merely among ourselves, but to every nation and kindred and people and tongue under heaven, is to be performed manfully, fearlessly, cheerfully—as an honour and not as a sacrifice. That the gospel is to be preached, not for praise, vain glory, or filthy lucre; but as a high privilege and a sacred obligation. That those who cannot labour in the word and doctrine as preachers, missionaries and teachers, will delight to contribute their money to educate, train up, and sustain the duly qualified and authorized heralds of salvation in sufficient numbers to convert and Christianize the whole family of mankind. The time must come, when Christian men will consecrate their gold and silver mainly, if not exclusively, to this most legitimate object, and esteem it an honour thus to become co-workers with God and his faithful servants in the glorious and stupendous

enterprise of conquering a world for Christ and for Heaven.

My own particular sphere of ministerial duty has ever been extremely humble and limited, as regards age and numbers, though not unimportant in reference to the ultimate welfare of the church and the public. My province, too, has always demanded a different kind and form of preaching from that which obtains in a popular assembly. A word in season—a little here and a little there—and something every day to one or a dozen, as occasion offered or suggested—without touching on points of theological or ecclesiastical controversy, and without the formal method of regular sermonizing—has been the fashion of my own very imperfect essays in the good work of the gospel ministry. I know nothing from experience of the cares, anxieties, dangers, labours, responsibilities and trials of the pastoral relation. I do not presume therefore to instruct or to counsel a veteran brother, whose praise is in all the churches; whose labours of love amongst us have already been evidently owned and most signally blessed by the great Bishop of souls; whom we have, with one voice, invited to our city and welcomed to our hearts as our spiritual guide and father; and to whom we are about to pledge the right hand of fellowship, and to commit our dearest interests for time and for eternity.

Happy—thrice happy—may this sacred connection prove to him, to us, and to our children! And may the blessing of Almighty God—the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost—abide upon him in all his ministra-

tions; upon us in all our ways; and upon the holy Catholic Church forever. Amen!

NOTE.—Mr. Jefferson, in his Notes on Virginia, at the beginning of Query 17th, speaks as follows:—

"The first settlers in this country [Virginia] were emigrants from England, of the English church, just at a point of time when it was flushed with complete victory over the religious of all other persuasions. Possessed, as they became, of the powers of making, administering, and executing the laws, they showed equal intolerance in this country with their Presbyterian brethren, who had emigrated to the northern government [New England.]"

Mathew Carey, in an essay read before the American Philosophical Society and published in the newspapers in 1828, after an appropriate and very just eulogium upon Lord Baltimore and the liberal policy of his American government and institutions, thus proceeds:—

"The merit of Calvert is greatly enhanced by the contrast between his system and that of Virginia and New England. In the former colony, the Protestant Episcopalian religion was established; in the latter, Presbyterianism. The Episcopalians persecuted the Presbyterians and other denominations but their own, in Virginia, —and the Presbyterians persecuted the Episcopalians in New England. Maryland, the only Catholic colony in the country, afforded an asylum to the persecuted religionists of both descriptions, and indeed of all other descriptions."

"For the honour of human nature, it were to be wished that a veil could be drawn over the residue of the proceedings in this case; as they are foul and dishonourable. Some time after the revolution of 1688, the Protestant and Presbyterian members of assembly in Maryland, acting in concert, with a degree of ingratitude which every honourable man must regard with abhorrence, passed the whole body of the barbarous and piratical penal laws against the Catholics, which were in force in England, by which the Catholics were not only deprived of their seats in the legislature, and disqualified therefrom in future, but subject to a severe persecu-

tion. History, in the odious details of human turpitude, presents nothing much more revolting."

Mr. Carey quotes from Burke the following passages: "This liberty [of concience] which was never in the least instance violated, encouraged a great number, not only of the Church of England, but of Presbyterians, Quakers, and all kinds of dissenters, to settle in Maryland."

"When, upon the revolution, power changed hands in that province, the new men made but an indifferent requital for the liberties and indulgences they had enjoyed under the old administration. They not only deprived the Roman Catholics of all share in the government, but of all the rights of freemen. They have even adopted the whole body of the penal laws of England against them. They are at this day, [1770,] meditating new laws in the same spirit, and they would undoubtedly go to the greatest lengths in this respect, if the moderation and good sense of the government in England, did not set some bounds to their bigotry."

I have not taken the trouble to examine how the two above cited passages are connected by their author. I give them as Mr. Carey has joined them together. It is certainly true that, before the subversion of the proprietary government, every *Christian* sect was tolerated in Maryland. And it is equally true that, after the revolution of 1688, English Episcopacy reigned absolute and uncontrolled in that province. Dr. Ramsay, in his History of the United States, [vol. i. p. 220,] presents the simple facts in the following terms:—

"In Maryland and Virginia, a policy less favourable to population, and somewhat different from that of Pennsylvania, took place. The Church of England was incorporated, simultaneously, with the first settlement of Virginia; and, in the lapse of time, it also became the established religion of Maryland. In both these provinces, long before the American revolution, that church possessed a legal preeminence, and was maintained at the expense, not only of its own members, but of all other denominations. This deterred great numbers, especially of the Presbyterian denomination, who had emigrated from Ireland, from settling within the limits of these governments, and fomented a spirit of discord, between those who belonged to, and those who dissented from the established church."

"In Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and New Jersey, there never was any established religion." [Ibid. p 232.]

The proprietors of New Jersey, in 1676, when that province included a larger proportion of Presbyterians (though not yet organized as a church) than any other upon this continent, passed a code of fundamental laws, or perhaps rather a Bill of Rights, which contained the following liberal provision or declaration:—

"That no men, nor number of men upon earth, have power or authority to rule over men's consciences in religious matters; therefore it is consented, agreed, ordained, that no person or persons whatsoever, within the said province, at any time or times hereafter, shall be any ways, upon any pretence whatsoever, called in question or in the least punished or hurt, either in person, estate, or privilege, for the sake of his opinion, judgment, faith or worship, towards God in matters of religion. But that all and every such person or persons freely and fully have and enjoy his and their judgments and the exercise of their consciences in matters of religious worship throughout all the said province."

No existing church or sect ought to be arraigned or censured on account of the delusions or errors or crimes of their predecessors. The persecutions of past ages are not chargeable upon the Roman Catholics, or Episcopalians, or Puritans, or Presbyterians of the present generation: nor are they blameworthy on this score, unless they still maintain the same persecuting dogmas, or manifest the same persecuting spirit. That the Presbyterian Church in the United States utterly disclaims all such pretensions, and that she cherishes as catholic a spirit as any other church in the world, may be charitably presumed from the following, among other passages which might be cited from her Confession of Faith and plan of government:—

"The Presbyterian Church in the United States of America are unanimously of opinion:—

"That God alone is Lord of the conscience; and hath left it free from the doctrine and commandments of men, which are in anything contrary to his word, or beside it in matters of faith or worship: therefore they consider the rights of private judgment, in all matters that respect religion, as universal and unalienable: they do not even wish to see any religious constitution aided by the civil power, further than may be necessary for protection and security, and, at the same time, be equal and common to all others."

"That, in perfect consistency with the above principle of common right, every Christian church, or union, or association of particular

churches, is entitled to declare the terms of admission into its *communion*, and the qualifications of its ministers and members, as well as the whole system of its internal government which Christ hath appointed: that, in the exercise of this right, they may, notwithstanding, err, in making the terms of communion either too lax or too narrow; yet, even in this case, they do not infringe upon the liberty, or the rights of others, but only make an improper use of their own."

"They also believe that there are truths and forms with respect to which men of good characters and principles may differ. And in all these they think it the duty, both of private Christians and societies, to exercise mutual forbearance towards each other."

"That all church power, whether exercised by the body in general, or in the way of representation by delegated authority, is only ministerial and declarative; That is to say, that the Holy Scriptures are the only rule of faith and manners; that no church judicatory ought to pretend to make laws, to bind the conscience in virtue of their own authority; and that all their decisions should be founded upon the revealed will of God."

"It is absolutely necessary that the government of the church be exercised under some certain and definite form. And we hold it to be expedient, and agreeable to Scripture and the practice of the primitive Christians, that the church be governed by congregational, presbyterial, and synodical assemblies. In full consistency with this belief, we embrace in the spirit of charity, those Christians who differ from us, in opinion or in practice, on these subjects."

THE NECESSITY OF REGENERATION.

[NEWTOWN, LONG ISLAND, 1811.]

THE NECESSITY OF REGENERATION,

OR

THE NEW BIRTH.*

Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.—*Psalm* li. 10.

Vain man would fain be wise above his Maker. He would go to heaven, not only in a forbidden way, but without a single qualification for enjoying it when he gets there.

Now, if heaven be worth possessing, it is surely worth asking for. If it be a rich boon to which we can prefer no personal claim, then ought we most humbly and gratefully to accept it, on the terms and in the way in which it shall please God to bestow it. If we desire to enjoy heaven, then must we, to be consistent, desire to be qualified for it. Otherwise, we desire a blessing which we can neither comprehend nor participate.

A man cannot live in the ocean or in the fire. A fish cannot live in the air, nor a bird in the water. Every animal, in order to its existence and comfort, must be placed in an element suited to its nature and capacity.

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* Preached at Newtown, Long Island, in 1811.

A man of taste and science could take no pleasure in the society of savages; except on the score of novelty, and as affording a curious subject for philosophical study and speculation. Nor would a savage enjoy the intelligence and refinement of the enlightened and polished circles of a civilized metropolis. A virtuous man would be miserable in company with the abandoned and profane. And the profligate would be equally comfortless in the presence of the good and pious. A fiend of the bottomless pit would, probably, be as much out of place and as distant from enjoyment in the paradise of God, as an angel of glory would be in the regions of endless night.

These truths are sufficiently obvious, I am aware. But they are not more certain and obvious in regard to the cases just specified, than they are in regard to spiritual and eternal things, about which most men reason and act as if they knew nothing about them.

Fatal is the mistake under which multitudes lie, when they imagine that they would be happy in heaven, if they could, after a life of carnal indulgence, only succeed in gaining admission to its society and its privileges. No, my friends, heaven could not yield one moment's felicity to the lover of any sin, however small and unimportant it may be thought. For, if it be assumed that one degree of vice does of itself—in its own proper nature—contribute to felicity, it would be fair legitimate reasoning to infer that the greatest degree of vice, or the absolute reign of sin would insure the highest possible degree of felicity. And consequently that *hell* only could render the sinner perfectly happy, or be his congenial element.

But all men wish, or profess to wish, to escape from hell: and why? Simply because they conceive it to be a place of torment. Allow me then, brethren, to ask you—for it is possible that some of you may never have put the question to yourselves—what is it that constitutes the misery and the torment of hell? It is sin! Sin without mixture and in perfection. Sin occasions all the misery in this world. And where there is nothing but sin, there can be nothing but misery. And that place is hell: where sin, despair and wo reign with absolute and eternal sway. Every sinner in the universe is miserable just in proportion to his sinfulness. Place him where you will—on earth, in heaven or hell—he is miserable. And miserable he will remain, until sin, that accursed root of bitterness, be destroyed within him. Such is the appointment of God. Such the nature and the consequences of sin wherever and in whatever degree it exists.

The necessity of regeneration, or of some radical change in our nature, equivalent to it, has been in all ages admitted by those most competent to judge and to decide on the subject. Even the wisest and best of the ancient pagans acknowledged themselves utterly unable to walk in the narrow path of virtue. Although their ideas of virtue were extremely defective, and vastly inferior to those now entertained, even by the unbelieving part of the Christian world, yet they could not reach in practice the low standard of morals which they themselves inculcated. After the most painful trials and struggles, they were constrained to weep over their own blindness and

weakness and bondage to sin. They felt and confessed that their case was desperate, unless some benevolent and almighty being should interpose in their behalf, and deliver them from their corruptions. They saw therefore the expediency and the necessity of the very change which the gospel requires. They perceived their want, but knew not how to supply it. With what rapture, may we suppose, would they not have hailed the gracious Saviour who has removed the obstacles in our way to holiness and felicity, and who assures us that he is ready to create anew our sinful natures, the moment we apply to him!

The doctrine of regeneration, as revealed in the gospel, so far from being an objection, would, on the contrary, in their view, it may be presumed from their own declarations, have been its noblest ornament and recommendation. Without this, the gospel could not have met the difficulty under which they and all the world laboured. It would have been only a dead letter—a body without a soul—a system as useless and as cheerless as their own. But as it is, the gospel will stand forever approved as worthy of the divine Being who was its author; and as amply adequate to the removal of all the ills which guilty man is heir to.

We are told that Tedyuscung, a distinguished chief among the Delaware tribe of Indians, some fifty or sixty years ago, (about 1780,) while passing an evening with a Christian friend in Philadelphia, was addressed by the latter, after a long pause, as follows: "I will tell thee what I have been thinking of.—I have been thinking of

a rule delivered by the Author of the Christian religion, which, from its excellence, we call the golden rule." "Stop, said the chief, don't praise it to me, but rather tell me what it is, and let me think for myself. I do not wish you to tell me of its excellence—tell me what it is." "It is, said the Christian, for one man to do to another as he would that others should do to him." "That is impossible: it cannot be done,"—was the honest warrior's immediate reply. But after walking about the room in silence for a quarter of an hour, he came up to his friend with a smiling countenance and said: "Brother, I have been thoughtful of what you told me. If the Great Spirit, that made man, would give him a new heart, he could do as you say; but not else."

Thus this sagacious but untutored son of the forest appears to have descried the only means by which the gospel declares that man can be qualified to fulfil his social duties, or, indeed, any other duties, agreeably to the holy requirements of the divine law. He discovered the necessity of a *new heart:* and he also perceived that God only could give this new heart.

These are the two principal things implied in our text. "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." This is the language of every true penitent. It is the language of every sincere Christian. And it is the language of his heart and lips every day that he lives. And such would have been the language of the Indian chief, had his heart been affected with a just sense of the evil of sin, and had he desired to be holy as God is holy. His reason however conducted him

a good way in the discovery of speculative truth; and thus far reason may go. It appears strange indeed that any man, who reflects on the subject, should stop short of this.

When we consider the purity of the divine character and law; when we seriously meditate on the precepts of the gospel, on loving God with all the heart and our neighbour as ourselves, on using the world and not setting our affections upon it, on doing to others as we would have them do unto us, on guarding the heart so as not to indulge one unhallowed thought, desire or purpose,—are we not ready to exclaim, who is sufficient for these things?

Either perfect obedience, that is, perfect holiness, is not demanded of us; or, if it be, we are able of ourselves to attain to it, or God must dispose and enable us to perform his will.

If perfect obedience to a holy law be not our duty, or if a partial obedience will suffice: let us see what can be made of the matter thus presented. What do you mean by a partial obedience? Take a single precept by way of trial. You are commanded to love your Maker with all the heart. This is a very reasonable command. Have you ever complied with it, in any degree, or for any length of time whatever? Do you love God to-day, this hour, this moment? Will you forget him to-morrow, the next hour, the next moment? and disregard his authority altogether? I venture to pronounce the thing absurd and impossible. However men may flatter themselves with their general good character, and with their occa-

sional performance of prescribed duties, they do not act, in a single instance, from a principle of genuine love and obedience to the character and laws of God as exhibited in his word. If they could do this in one instance, they might do it in twenty, or in twenty thousand. They might do it steadily, and uniformly, and perfectly through life. And were they to do it once, they would wish to do it again. Every act of duty would prompt and impel to another act of duty. Should a man obey to-day, he would desire to obey to-morrow. He would love the work, otherwise it would be no duty at all. For the very supposition of doing a duty implies the love of it. Could a man delight in holy acts to-day, and to-morrow take delight in unholy or wicked acts? Or is there any such thing as half loving and half hating a duty while engaged in its performance? A parent imposes a task on his child: Is there no difference whether the child perform it cheerfully, and from love to his parent; or sullenly, and from the dread of rebuke or chastisement? And if the child be habitually affectionate and obedient; will he not delight in every opportunity of manifesting this amiable and dutiful spirit and disposition?

It is not my purpose, at present, to touch on any of the metaphysical subtleties supposed to be involved in the subject under consideration.

The fallen, ruined, depraved state of man—the necessity of an atonement for his sins—of a divine agency in changing his heart, while he remains free and accountable—have, I know, suggested many embarrassing difficulties to the minds of those who love to speculate. We

meet with them continually in books in one form or another; and we hear them every day from the lips of those disposed to cavil and object.

Many persons seem to take delight in charging upon the divine government and decrees all their follies and iniquities. They have read and heard enough on this subject to enable them to form a very specious argument and a very consolatory excuse. They presumptuously take their stand upon this ground, that, if God has decreed their salvation, they will certainly be saved. If not, there is an end of their hopes. They have no alternative—no choice—no ability to help themselves. The new heart, the regenerating influences of the Holy Ghost, being the gift of God, are of course placed beyond their reach and control. They can have no agency in the matter: and therefore all effort or concern on their part must be unavailing and superfluous. Hence they very deliberately conclude, that the wisest course for them is to get what they can of this world, and to leave the future to provide for itself.

With God's secret purpose, brethren, we have nothing to do, because we know nothing about it. Let no man therefore perplex himself about the divine decrees. They can have no bearing on his conduct. Nor can they be any better understood by the most profound and learned theologian than by the meanest and humblest of God's rational creatures.

But the true cause of most of the difficulties and mistakes which are current on this subject, may be resolved at once into the gross ignorance of our own character and

condition which so generally prevails. It is the proud assumption that we stand in the same relation to God now that Adam sustained before his fall, and that we are placed in a similar state of trial and probation, to be approved or condemned hereafter on the ground of our own personal merits or demerits, without any reference to a Mediator. This error, whether we perceive it or not, really lies at the bottom of much of the difficulty which meets us, and of much of the opposition which we feel to the grace of the gospel.

The fact is, that with his innocence, man did lose all power of obeying the divine law. He cannot perform a single holy act, or originate one holy purpose. He is depraved in all his faculties. Sin has corrupted and debased his whole nature. All the tendencies of his soul are to evil. There is a fountain of iniquity within him. The whole current of his affections is set in a direction contrary to the divine commands. God is not in all his thoughts. He has no respect to the will of God in any of his plans, designs or pursuits. Do you doubt the truth of this representation? Can you deliberately persuade yourselves that it is either unfounded or exaggerated? Then you must disbelieve every page of the Bible. Then you must disregard your own experience and the experience of all mankind in every age. For no truth or fact is more evident to the reason, feelings and observation of every man, who is not resolved to resist all evidence, and whose mind the god of this world has not blinded that he should believe a lie, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine unto him. (2 Cor. iv. 4.)

Such then being his deplorable condition, who can deliver him? He is in bondage: he is spiritually dead. And who can free him from this bondage, or raise him from this death? Can he do it himself? "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" (Job, xiv. 4.)

Now, here is the difficulty to be accounted for—the obstacle to be removed—the mystery to be explained. Look at it manfully. Examine it thoroughly. Let reason exercise her utmost skill and ingenuity on this subject. Admit that God is holy and wise and just and good. That he can exact nothing of his creatures which is unreasonable or incompatible with their nature, their duty or their happiness. Admit also, what you cannot fairly deny, that man is in a state of sin and of rebellion against his Creator.—I say you cannot fairly deny this, because man is continually suffering under the displeasure of God. And why should he suffer, why be miserable, why be subject to pain and sorrow and disease and death, if not guilty in the sight of that pure and beneficent Being who governs the world with perfect wisdom and equity?—Let reason show *how* man, thus circumstanced, can render himself acceptable to God. How he can commence and prosecute a course of holy obedience to the law of God. How he can purify his own heart, so as to lead a life of faith and love and charity agreeably to the precepts of the gospel. Or, if despairing of success in this attempt, she admit the necessity of some divine aid—of the Spirit's co-operation with our own exertions in this behalf—let her show how this partial influence, this co-operation, consists with the free agency of man,

any better than the hypothesis which attributes the whole work to God. Alas! brethren, mere natural reason can throw no light on this momentous subject. It does but involve us in greater darkness and perplexity. It discovers many difficulties, but removes none. It leaves us, not only in a labyrinth of uncertainty, but in utter despair!

But not so the gospel. It is the glory of the gospel that it presents a remedy for every evil which afflicts us. It first shows us what we need, and then offers to supply that need. It causes us to feel that we are guilty, and wretched, and helpless; and then tells us how our guilt may be expiated, and where help may be found. There is no defect, no inconsistency, no partial or half-way deliverance here. It points us directly to God as the giver of every good and perfect gift—as the Author and Finisher of our faith. It conceals nothing from our view, and suggests no compromise with pride and corruption. It tells us plainly that we cannot help ourselves, and that no creature on earth can help us. But it does not leave us in this helpless condition. It bids us look to an Almighty Helper, who is both able and willing to deliver us. How rich and abundant is the provision of the gospel! It proffers us a complete salvation: deliverance from the curse of the law, and deliverance from the dominion of sin: a heaven of endless and unmingled bliss, and a heart capable of enjoying it.

Where now is the mighty injury done to the dignity of man? Or, how is his liberty infringed or affected by this arrangement? Does the gospel take from him any

good thing which he possessed before; or constrain him to do anything which he disapproves, or does not freely choose? No, brethren, it merely ascribes to God what no finite being is competent to achieve. It directs to the Deity in a case worthy of his interposition, and in which He alone can operate. While it leaves to man the full unrestricted use of all his faculties. It leaves him to act in this as in every other case. When, for instance, he is destitute of the necessaries of life, is he not ready enough to ask alms? When labouring under a painful and threatening disease, does he not apply to his physician for a cure? Is it not the nature of man, when in difficulty, in danger, in want, in affliction, to look to others for aid and deliverance? And why should he not do this when his soul is in want of all things,—literally perishing under a mortal disease, and on the very brink of eternal perdition? Why not look out for help—why not raise an eye to heaven—where, only, help can be found? Why not supplicate the favour of God, who is inviting him, by his word, his ministers and his spirit, to come unto him that he may have life?

Brethren, we are all in fact poor, needy, perishing, helpless sinners. But God, in his infinite mercy, has provided a way in which we may be relieved and saved. Shall we refuse this relief and this salvation, because we do not approve the way in which it has pleased God to proffer it? Restoration to the divine likeness, to the divine favour, and to eternal happiness, is made possible: and shall we cavil about the terms or the manner in which these blessings are to be attained? What would

you think of that poor beggar who should choose to perish in the presence of a benevolent rich man, rather than ask his assistance? Or of that criminal who should suffer himself to be led to execution rather than supplicate the clemency of his sovereign or his judge, although previously assured of a pardon if he would humbly petition for it? Yet, such instances of pride and infatuation would be as nothing compared with the conduct of all those who reject the offers of the gospel. They choose darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. They roll sin as a sweet morsel under their tongues: and they do not believe, or do not realize that it worketh death and everlasting destruction. Here is the root of the evil. They have no adequate conception of the infinite glory and holiness of the Omnipotent Jehovah, or of Jehovah's perfect law which they have violated. They wish to be saved in their sins, not from their sins. They desire to be happy: but they do not consider that holiness is essential to happiness: that the one cannot exist without the other. This fatal error enters deeply into all the objections which are urged—into all that antipathy which is cherished against the gracious provision of the gospel.

The necessity, then, of regeneration results from the deep, inherent, total depravity of the human heart. The necessity of a divine agency in regenerating the heart, results from the utter inability of man to do the work himself. And both these truths are taught, and constantly taught, and most plainly taught, in the Holy Scriptures. No real Christian ever doubted them.

If human opinion or testimony be worth anything on the subject: the Christian is the man of all the world to whom the appeal ought to be made. Who else can judge? Who else knows anything of the matter? If all the pious, in every age, concur in sentiment in regard to that which constitutes the very essence of piety, and the foundation of all their hopes of heavenly felicity: why reject their testimony? Why have recourse for counsel or for a decision to those who confessedly never believed or experienced or understood the doctrine in question? In works or opinions of human art or science or taste or skill, we always pay a respectful deference to those who are adepts in the branches or departments which they profess: and we care not for the judgment of the empiric or sciolist, of the ignorant and the inexperienced. Thus it ought to be in the present case.

But it was not my purpose to treat of regeneration, in this discourse, in all its comprehensive extent and bearings, as we find it unfolded in the orthodox systems of doctrinal theology. I say nothing of what is usually styled its essence, and very little of its general character or distinctive features.

It is all-important, however, for us to know whether this radical change—this grand moral revolution has been wrought in ourselves. How shall we know this? How can we ascertain that this gracious work has been effected in us? What are the evidences of it? To this inquiry, I reply in few words. The Scriptures describe the new birth chiefly by its effects. This is probably the only mode adapted to our weak and very limited capaci-

ties. Repentance, faith in Christ, supreme love to God and devotedness to his glory; love towards all men, especially the brethren; deliverance from the dominion of sin, victory over the world, deep habitual humility, abhorrence of evil; meekness, patience, charity, temperance, justice, truth, purity; and all the fruits of the Spirit, are represented as the genuine effects and evidences of that change without which no man can ever see the kingdom of God.

Nor is it any objection to this representation, that these graces are possessed but imperfectly in this life. It is admitted, and the Scriptures admit it and explain the reason of it, that they are possessed but imperfectly, and very imperfectly too, even by the best of men. They are continually opposed and obscured by the remaining power of indwelling sin, and by the manifold temptations which assail us on every side. Nevertheless, they take root here, and are daily gaining strength in the soul. And however severe the warfare—however numerous the obstacles which we may be called to surmount—yet the Spirit will eventually bring us off conquerors and more than conquerors, through him that loved us. (Rom. viii. 37.)

There is one mistake to which some persons are liable on this subject, which deserves to be particularly noticed; especially, as it is frequently the occasion of great perplexity and distress to those who labour under it. It is a belief that they ought to be able to designate the precise time and manner in which regeneration takes place. And because they cannot do this to their own satisfac-

tion, they are led to doubt that they have ever experienced a work of grace in their hearts at all. Brethren, this is not necessary: and, in ordinary circumstances, perhaps not even desirable. Many persons, it is true, can with certainty point to the hour and the place, when and where, the first arrow of conviction entered their souls—when they first began to tremble beneath the terrors of the law and the frowns of the Almighty—when the first gleam of hope pierced the darkness and horror which an awakened conscience had gathered around them—when first the Saviour appeared to them the chief among ten thousand and one altogether lovely—when they first rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory at the footstool of sovereign mercy and redeeming love, and before the throne of a reconciled God and Father. Such has often been the experience of ignorant wayward transgressors when suddenly called by Heaven's mandate to flee the wrath to come, and to believe in a crucified Redeemer. Especially in seasons of revivals—of extraordinary outpourings of the Holy Spirit upon the churches, and upon guilty neighbourhoods and congregations. Then, almost every subject of the gracious change can give a minute history of the work from its commencement, and through all the stages of its progress. But this knowledge is not essential to the change itself, nor to our own satisfactory conviction that we have experienced it. We can have clear unequivocal evidences of the fact without it. And of a kind vastly superior to it—much more substantial, and much less delusive.

The tree is known by its fruits. A man's character is ascertained by his conduct. This is the test which our Saviour has given us to try both ourselves and others. And it is the only infallible test. Many an heir of glory, doubtless, can affirm that, though he was once blind, yet now he sees—though once dead, yet is now alive—though once wandering upon the dark mountains of sin and error, yet now rejoices in the light and consolations of the gospel—who, nevertheless, may not be able to give any very definite account of the time and manner of his conversion. Of one thing however he is certain—that he has chosen God for the portion of his soul, and that his delight is in his service. Here there can be no mistake. A man surely knows, or he may know, and ought to know, whether he has respect unto all God's commandments—whether his hopes and his trust are placed in the Saviour—whether he cultivates that temper and those habits which the gospel requires—or whether the reverse of all this is true in regard to him.

There is too wide a difference between the heirs of heaven and hell, between the servants of Christ and of Satan, between the children of light and of darkness, for them to be easily confounded. As the principles which actuate these two descriptions of men are totally dissimilar, and as the objects on which their affections centre, are, in their very nature, directly opposed to each other, so likewise must a corresponding difference appear in their lives and manners,—in their daily walk and conversation. And, if there be no such visible, manifest

difference, then neither is there any difference in their real character and condition. They are all equally strangers to God and to the covenant of promise; whatever may be their professions or pretensions to the contrary. They may be self-deceived, or they may be hypocrites; but Christians, that is, the sincere followers of Christ in the regeneration, they cannot be.

How many cold-hearted formalists—how many lukewarm nominal professors—how many idolatrous votaries of Mammon, of gold, of unrighteous gain, who are owned as members of the visible church—how many bigoted, uncharitable, persecuting, intolerant defenders of the faith—in short, how many thousands (if sentence, founded on these premises and agreeably to these distinctions, were pronounced,) would be swept forever from the ranks of the faithful, and their names be erased from our registers of church membership; as they certainly can have no place in the Lamb's book of life!

Very many persons, in these days of the church's external prosperity, have a name to live, or enjoy a great reputation for sanctity, who will, it is feared, never enter into the kingdom of God, or be acknowledged as the genuine disciples of the blessed Redeemer.

That unaffected guileless simplicity of character—that deep habitual humility—that peaceful, forgiving, charitable temper—that meek, contented, quiet, cheerful, grateful spirit—that entire acquiescence in the divine dispensations and unfeigned submission to the divine will—that unqualified preference of what is right in the sight of

God to every earthly object or interest—that fearless intrepidity, that magnanimous courage which dares, in the name of the Lord, to encounter human opinion, and to face all the legions of earth and hell in the faithful discharge of duty—that honest endeavour and constant aim to do good, rather than to become rich or great or learned or wise in the estimation of the world only—that retiring, unobtrusive, unostentatious benevolence, which, while it prompts to the most liberal and praiseworthy deeds, would "blush to find it fame"—these, though the peculiar distinguishing traits and features of the Christian character, as portrayed by the graphic pencil of inspiration, are rarely to be recognized in those who now assume the Christian name and usurp the Christian's prerogatives.

See to it, brethren, that you have not merely a name to live before men. "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" (2 Cor. xiii. 5.) That man is born again, who sincerely desires to be like God—to be holy as God is holy. Whose constant and earnest prayer is: "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me."

An additional observation or two shall conclude the discourse.

Men of the world are apt, in contemplating the gospel plan of salvation, to fall into one of two errors. They either imagine that they can do all that is required of them—that they can obey the commands of their kind

and merciful Creator, and literally work out their own salvation, whenever they please, without any special aid from the Divine Spirit. Or, they suffer themselves to be discouraged by the apparent impossibility which lies before them, and settle down into a state of indifference about their salvation, under an idea that God is a hard master, unreasonably severe, exacting more of them than they can perform, and therefore that they are perfectly excusable in giving themselves no trouble or concern about the matter. These errors are equally fatal and delusive.

1. To those who cherish the first, I would say, make the experiment. Make it fairly and without delay. Why do you continue in sin, if it be so easy a matter to forsake it? Why do you not repent, and reform your lives? Why do you not purify your hearts and devote yourselves honestly to the service of your Creator, who demands this at your hands? Why do you not evince the strength and soundness of your principles, and the sincerity of your purposes, by a holy walk and conversation? Until you do this yourselves, or point us to those who have done it, we shall take the liberty to doubt your ability to do it at all. You may ridicule the doctrine of regeneration—you may boast of the goodness of the human heart, and of the potency of human reason—you may profess confidence in, I know not what, confused notions of the divine mercy and benignity—and pretend to reverence the law and the character of your Maker. But we demand proof. Neither ridicule nor boasting is

argument or evidence. Show us the man who has really imbibed a relish for spiritual and heavenly things—who truly loves God and seeks to honour his name—who does not, at the same time, with humble gratitude, acknowledge himself a debtor to divine grace for it all—and we will renounce our system as untenable. But until this be done, we will glory only in the cross of Christ. We will continue to believe that the heart of the sons of men is full of evil—that it is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. That they who are in the flesh cannot please God. That to be carnally minded is death: but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. (Rom. viii. 6.)

2. Let us, in like manner, bring to the test of experiment the other alternative suggested, and see if it be not as groundless as the first.

When men say that they cannot save themselves, they say what, in one sense, is very true. But when, on this ground, they attempt to justify themselves for being careless, inactive, and utterly indifferent about the matter; they mistake or pervert the gracious spirit of the gospel, and all the principles of human nature and of human action. Why do not such men practise agreeably to their doctrines? Why do they trouble themselves about any worldly interest whatever? Why are they anxious about what they shall eat, or drink, or wherewithal they shall be clothed? Why do they not sit down and fold up their arms in indolence; and leave all their temporal

concerns where they profess to leave their souls—to Providence, to God, who orders and governs and arranges and disposes and regulates all things, both small and great, after the counsel of his own will, or according to his own sovereign pleasure? Upon their own principles, will they not live as long and live as well, become as rich, as learned, as honourable, without a single thought or effort on their part as with? Why all this labour and care and skill and pains to attain some trivial object in this world, when God has fixed the whole train of events beyond the possibility of change or failure in a single point or particular? Is not their destiny here as much under the control of Deity as is their destiny hereafter? Is not their temporal welfare as much the object of divine direction as their eternal welfare? Are not all their days numbered, and their whole earthly career marked out and determined by HIM without whom not even a sparrow falleth to the ground?

Let their reasoning then, if it be good for any thing, have full scope and fair play. Let it influence their conduct in one department as well as another. Let it make them as careless about this life as about the next: and they will have, at least, the merit of being consistent. They will give evidence of the sincerity of their professions. But who has ever given such evidence? Who has ever acted upon such principles? Who expects to live that does not eat? Or to reap that does not sow? Or to become rich that does not labour? Or to gain any earthly good without resorting to the means that lead to it?

It will be found, probably, upon examination, that the very men who thus sluggishly, or rather presumptuously, confide their souls to their Maker, are the most solicitous about the things of this world—most intent upon them—most ardent and indefatigable in the pursuit of them. Nay, these, of all others, are the men who give themselves the least concern about a particular superintending providence in the affairs of this life. They act as if there were no God—as if their worldly condition and prosperity depended wholly and exclusively upon their own efforts—as if their fortune and destiny here were in their own hands. With what consistency can they pretend that they may lawfully or safely dismiss all anxiety about the future, on the ground that God is the sovereign arbiter of their lot, and has unalterably fixed the character and the doom of their immortal spirits? Their daily practice contradicts their whole system in every feature and particular. It proves that they do not believe their own arguments to be valid; that it is all specious sophistry—vain trifling—presumptuous, high-handed opposition to the authority and government of the Almighty; a mere refuge of lies which offers them no security, no comfort, no satisfaction—which will not endure the test of rational scrutiny—and in which they themselves have no confidence in those seasons of trial, of affliction, of danger, when all human wisdom and all human helps appear in their native nothingness and vanity.

What says the Scripture of these matters? Does the Bible any where teach or intimate that men can get

along in this world, or provide for its wants or its enjoyments, independently of God, any better than they can for the future world? Does it give them plenary powers to mark out and to pursue whatever course they please on the earth, while it bars the gates of Paradise, and binds up their souls in chains of adamant, so as to cut off every ground of anxiety, of hope, of effort, on their part?

No, my friends, the direct contrary of this is the fact. The Bible holds out every encouragement in regard to the future world, and promises nothing for this; except when this is made secondary and subservient to the rest. The salvation of the soul is every where represented as the principal thing—the one thing needful—the main purpose, object, pursuit and business of life. The way in which this salvation is to be sought and attained, is most clearly pointed out. And invitations, promises, inducements, and assurances of success to those who honestly engage in the great work, abound in every page of the sacred volume. There is no peradventure, no hazard, no uncertainty in the case. The salvation of every sinner, who really wishes to be saved, and who seeks to be saved in the appointed way, is as sure as the veracity and existence of the Eternal. "Ask (says God, the Saviour,) and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened." (Matt. vii. 7.)

Cease then to murmur against the divine government,

as being arbitrary, or unjust, or unnecessarily rigid. Let no sinner imagine, or impiously affirm, that God requires of him impossibilities. Let him recollect that he is not to be justified by his own works, nor to be delivered from the tyranny, the love, and the condemnation of sin merely by his own unassisted exertions. It is the law—that law which is holy and just and good—that law which is a transcript of the divine perfections—that law which was given to man at the beginning, and which is binding on all the rational creation of God—it is this law which awards life and happiness to perfect obedience—but only to perfect obedience—which says, do and live—but which says also: "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." (Gal. iii. 10.)

Under the law, men—sinful, fallen, guilty men—might well talk of impossibilities—of insuperable difficulties and obstacles—and lament their utter inability to comply with its demands. They might mourn in despair their hapless condition. The law furnishes no glimmering of hope to any transgressor. Death, everlasting death, is the sentence which it pronounces on every offender. It has sealed up the doom of rebel angels to all eternity. And our doom would be equally fixed and unalterable, had we nothing but our own obedience "to build our heavenly hopes upon."

But in the gospel, the glorious, gracious gospel, every thing that pertains to eternal life, is the unmerited gift of God through Jesus Christ. The gospel was never designed to teach us how to escape deserved wrath by any

meritorious efforts of our own, but to destroy self-dependence in every shape, and to lead us to One greater than we, who is mighty to save, even to the uttermost, all who come to God through him. And the Bible is full of invitations to sinners to come unto Christ for pardon and salvation—for deliverance from the curse and the penalty of the law, which must be endured by all who reject the grace of the gospel; to come guilty, polluted, labouring and heavy-laden, without money and without price. "Him that cometh to me (he says) I will in no wise cast out." "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." "Awake, therefore, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." (Eph. v. 14.) But, says the Saviour, ye will not come unto me that ye may have life. "Be not deceived, then, brethren, God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption: but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." (Gal. vi. 7–8.)

Such is the constitution of human nature, and such is the economy of divine grace, that—whatever difficulties may perplex our feeble intellect when we attempt to scan the purposes and plans and government of infinite wisdom—our salvation is placed within our reach and at our option. Wherever the gospel is preached, there is mercy's door thrown wide open: and whosoever will, may enter the city of refuge and live forever; and whosoever will, may turn aside, may pass by, may refuse to approach. But no man was ever driven away who sin-

cerely and earnestly sought admittance. No impenitent sinner—no hardened reprobate—ever believed, in the honest moment of dissolution, that he could justly charge his guilt and his perdition upon his Maker. Nor will any ever dream of such a charge, or of such a plea, in the judgment of the great day. Then, every mouth will be stopped—every murmur will be hushed—every objection will be forgotten—the irrevocable sentence of eternal justice will be heard in awful silence—and the self-convicted, self-condemned, conscience-stricken sinner will shrink away from the divine majesty and glory, overwhelmed with shame, remorse, confusion and despair. He will be constrained, as he sinks down to the bottomless pit, where the worm dieth not and where the fire is not quenched, to acknowledge that the Judge of all the earth has done right. And, while eternity rolls on, he will carry in his bosom the consciousness that heaven was once within his reach—that heaven might have been his everlasting home—that he is himself the guilty author of all his woes—that he chose darkness rather than light, death rather than life, sin rather than holiness, the world rather than Christ, hell rather than heaven. This conviction will follow him, and haunt him, and torture him, and prey like a vulture upon his vitals, while the eternal Judge and King shall exist and reign.

What folly is it in an atom of dust, to presume here to arraign the wisdom and righteousness of the infinite and incomprehensible Jehovah! Be still, and know, that

God is light, and that in him is no darkness at all. What though his ways be past finding out and his judgments a great deep—what though the creatures of his hand be under his control and at his disposal—what though his justice be inexorable, and his mercy, at the same time, boundless—what though we be debtors to him for all things, and yet be left freely to choose our own destiny —what though he work in us both to will and to do of his own good pleasure, while we give all diligence to make our calling and election sure, strive earnestly to enter in at the straight gate, and work out our own salvation with fear and trembling? Is there a mystery here which we can neither explain nor comprehend? Be it so. God has not made it our duty to comprehend it. We may go to heaven without comprehending it. And be happy in heaven, and yet, if such be the divine will, remain forever in the dark on this subject.

Salvation, we again repeat, is all of grace. It is all a free gift. All right to heaven, and every qualification for heaven, is the gift of God and the work of his Spirit. What more could infinite goodness have done for his rebellious creatures than has been done? What could they desire of God beyond what he has in fact provided and accomplished? What pagan, what deist, what infidel, what philosopher of all our sinful race has ever yet devised a scheme more simple, more beautiful, more consistent with human dignity, more honourable to the divine character, more harmonious in all its parts, or better adapted to our circumstances, than that which

the gospel exhibits? Who has ever invented or contrived a system calculated, in the least degree, to satisfy even the proudest and most obstinate opposers of revelation? Who can restore ruined, degraded man to his primitive purity and rectitude? What discipline can eradicate the principles of iniquity from his heart, mould him into the image of his Maker, and fit him for the society and employments of angels and seraphs in the celestial Paradise?

How do you, my hearers, expect to effect this great work in yourselves? You are either prepared for heaven, or you are not. If not, when or how do you purpose to dispose of this momentous concern? Do you never think of these things? Do you read the sacred pages of this sacred volume without emotion, without fear, without hope? Do you hear of Christ, and heaven, and salvation, from day to day, with indifference? Does conscience whisper peace to your souls in all your wanderings, in all your amusements and follies and pursuits? Do you behold the daily ravages of death, and witness his near approach to yourselves without alarm? Do you discern no danger, feel no misgivings, dread no judgment, anticipate no evil? Do you enjoy a calm, unruffled, delightful serenity of mind when you look towards that world of spirits into which you must soon be ushered? No, my friends, these things cannot be. It is not in human nature. There is no peace, no real substantial peace, saith my God, to the wicked. None but Christ can give you peace. None but Christ can smooth the

rugged path of life, and impart that temper and spirit which will enable you to contemplate the future with steady hope and unmingled joy.

We warn you, therefore, to flee the wrath to come by laying hold on the hope that is set before you in the gospel. We invite you to the blessed Saviour. Come, taste and see that the Lord is good. Come to Jesus, the Prince of peace: he is ready to receive you. He is waiting to be gracious to every penitent returning prodigal in this house and in the world. Search the Scriptures, and see if these things be not so. Pray to God for direction. None ever prayed in vain. Pray for light, for assistance, for a new heart, for the grace of faith and repentance. Bow down at the footstool of sovereign mercy, and beg for your life. For you are condemned—condemned to death—to death eternal. How soon the sentence may be executed, and your doom be fixed forever, none can tell. Pardon is now offered you: will you accept it? Do you see your need of it: do you feel your want of it? Are you willing to ask for it? Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world! To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. To-morrow you may be beyond the reach of mercy. The Bible, with all its rich provisions and kindly invitations, gives no countenance to sloth or delay. It holds out no encouragement to those who are looking forward to a more convenient season. How many tender warnings, how many pressing calls, how many terrible threatenings does it not address to the guilty and the perishing?

When will you regard them? When will you lay these things to heart?

In a few years at most, and every soul in this assembly will be in the eternal world! How many of us shall be in heaven, God only knows. But that any of us should sink down to hell, with the Bible in our hands, and the glad tidings of salvation sounding in our ears, is an awful, dreadful thought! Except ye be born again ye cannot see the kingdom of God. Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. God be merciful unto us sinners, for Christ's sake! Amen.

THE NECESSITY OF REVELATION.

[NASHVILLE, 1830.]

NECESSITY OF REVELATION,

AND

MAN'S AGENCY IN DIFFUSING A KNOWLEDGE OF IT.*

Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you. 2 *Thessalonians*, iii. 1.

And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.—*Mark*, xvi. 16.

The world is supposed to be growing wiser as it becomes older. Each succeeding age claims to be more enlightened than the preceding. We, of the present day, fancy ourselves vastly superior to our forefathers: and are prone to esteem lightly, perhaps to ridicule, many of their customs, habits and opinions. There may be some truth in the position generally,—but there is also much error mingled with it. If the light of science and of truth has been steadily advancing, and extending its benign influence over the character and condition of mankind; it must still be admitted that every new generation, in order to be benefited by the labours and discoveries of the past, must be carefully

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* Preached at Nashville in 1830.

trained and instructed—must be elevated by education to the rank already attained by the master spirits of other days. Knowledge of no kind is hereditary. Whatever advantages or privileges or qualities may be made by positive enactment, or may be presumed by natural laws, to descend from parents to children,—yet *knowledge* of every kind must be *acquired*. And the acquisition, to a certain extent, is usually made by the joint effort of the parent and the child, of the teacher and the pupil. This is the order of nature and of Providence; and is therefore universal.

In every country, too, there is a certain standard of excellence in literature, in science, in the arts, in morals, and in every department of human effort, ambition and enterprise; beyond which ordinary minds never aspire to soar. They are content to reach it; or to approximate as nearly to it as their means or desires shall enable or dispose them to surmount the difficulties and obstacles which lie in their way. Hence the importance that this standard should be a correct one in matters which affect the moral character of the people, and of a high order as respects intellectual cultivation.

Newton had studied and unfolded the laws of our beautiful and harmonious system in vain, had no others been induced to follow in his footsteps as humble disciples,—as mere learners of the astonishing and sublime truths which he had mastered and explained. What he discovered and demonstrated has become to the rest of the world a matter of science,— a something to be learned, as we learn the alphabet—which itself was the

invention of some gifted genius in a remote and unknown age.

Thus it is, and has ever been. From time to time, an extraordinary individual appears, and bursts the shackles of ages, and pierces through the mists and darkness which seemed impervious to all the world besides; and suddenly extends the boundaries of knowledge, and widens the sphere of human exertion, and becomes a benefactor to his race. When once a grand achievement of this kind is made, how easy is it to learn to do the same thing? The mariner's compass is a simple instrument: but who can tell the difficulties which its inventor had to conquer and adjust, before he dared to intrust himself to its guidance upon the waves of the mighty deep? or who can now recount its benefits to our world?

We are all familiar with the affecting story of Columbus's toils and struggles to obtain permission from Europe's haughty and illiberal monarchs to attempt the noblest discovery ever yet effected by mortal prowess: but when made,—who could not traverse the wide Atlantic to the fair land of wealth and promise?

When Franklin had taught the lightning of heaven to obey his voice, any rude mechanic is forthwith able to secure his dwelling from its destructive violence.

Every river and bay and lake and manufactory bears testimony to the wonderful agency of the steam engine; while the names of Watt and Fulton are known only to the intelligent few. Thus too, the art of Printing diffuses its blessings to millions; while the original contriver

of the curious machinery and process is either forgotten, or his claims are disputed. The world however has gained the prize; and continues to reap all its advantages from the mere mechanical skill of very ordinary workmen. So that an author of the most transcendent genius may now address himself to thousands and millions of his fellow-men through the medium of the press: whereas, without this instrument, only a few individuals of wealth and taste could have been profited by his labours. In order however to attain even the mechanical skill necessary for any of these operations, a previous apprenticeship, or a course of education is indispensable.

It no longer requires the talents of a Newton to compose an almanac—or of a Hadley or Godfrey to construct a quadrant—or of a Faust to erect a printing press—or of a Columbus to discover a new world—or of a Franklin to forge a lightning rod—or of a Fulton to build a steamboat—or of a Whitney to manufacture a cotton gin—or of a Lavoisier or Davy to detect the mysterious affinities of matter—or of a Linnæus or Buffon or Werner or Häuy to arrange and classify the vegetable, animal and mineral productions of the natural world—or of a Grotius or Vattel to determine the maxims of international jurisprudence—or of an Adam Smith to comprehend the laws of productive industry and profitable traffic—or of a Roger Williams to sever Church from State, and to assign to each its legitimate sphere of action—or of a Washington to teach the principles of a virtuous ambition and of a well-regulated liberty. Still,

of all these and a thousand other momentous discoveries and inventions, the world would have remained profoundly ignorant, but for those, or other equally illustrious pioneers. They led the way. The rest of mankind had merely to adopt and use the results of their superior ingenuity and wisdom and exertions.

In all those arts and sciences, therefore, which contribute to the improvement and embellishment of man's worldly condition, we find ourselves debtors to the extraordinary powers of extraordinary individuals, who have arisen in different ages and countries, and have given a new impulse and a new complexion to human enterprise. Whether we acknowledge, in such instances, any peculiar interposition of Heaven or not—the effects are the same, and not the less remarkable, or less worthy of gratitude to the bountiful Giver of all things.

But in concerns purely moral or religious, we are constrained to assume a different theory to account for the known phenomena. The most ancient records, exclusive of the Bible, carry us back to nations highly civilized and cultivated—to Egypt, Chaldea, Assyria, Phœnicia, Carthage, Greece and Rome. In all these, human talent appears to have been exerted to the utmost, and human wisdom to have achieved its greatest prodigies. In the useful and fine arts, in literature, in philosophy, in poetry, in eloquence, in war, in government,—we still recur to pagan antiquity for models of excellence. In some of these, they are confessedly unrivalled, and can never be surpassed. But in morals and religion: what a contrast do even Greece and Rome present to the sys-

tems prevalent where the feeblest glimmerings of gospel light can be traced? Why this astonishing difference? Why did their sagacious and accomplished sages, who, in profound and indefatigable research after truth, were never exceeded, fail in attaining to even its simplest and most obvious elements? Why did they continue to grope along in midnight darkness, and to dream away their lives in a labyrinth of the grossest absurdities? Assuredly, it was not through lack of natural talent, or from any defect in intellectual training, or from any impatience of investigation. For never did men apply themselves to this very work under more favourable auspices, or with a better chance of success. And yet Solon, and Lycurgus, and Pythagoras, and Socrates, and Plato, and Aristotle, with all their varied stores of rare and hard-earned erudition, fell infinitely short of the knowledge which the unlettered Christian of our day possesses in regard to moral duties and religious sanctions.

Here opens a large and legitimate field of curious speculation and interesting comparison. We have heard much of the light of nature—of the sufficiency of human reason—and of the glorious discoveries and achievements which may be made by mortal intelligence, unassisted and untrammelled: but where, we demand, are the evidences, the fruits, the trophies of unguided, uncontrolled, uninspired human reason? Was not the philosopher of Greece, who studied in the colleges and temples of Egypt, who travelled to the remotest East in quest of knowledge, who conversed with the wise men of all civilized

Asia, and who returned at length with the accumulated science and traditionary lore of the world, and spent the remainder of his life in the most laborious and painful examination of all known and all conceivable forms and systems of ethics and theology; and who exhausted his own admirable powers in rearing a moral edifice worthy of his own and of his country's distinguished fame:—was not such an individual capable of making at least some progress towards a development or discovery of man's real character, condition, duties, hopes, prospects and final destiny? But all the Greek and all the Roman moralists expended their strength and exhausted the resources of their mighty intellects to no purpose. They never advanced a step towards the obvious and rational and pure and holy and cheering and sublime doctrines, facts and principles which are disclosed in the Christian's Bible.

Here then is the boundary line, distinctly drawn, between what man may achieve by those natural faculties which God has bestowed with a liberal hand on our race generally, and what those faculties, in their highest state of cultivation, are utterly incompetent to effect. No ethereal spirit however exalted,—no master mind however penetrating or gigantic,—no Columbus, or Newton, or Franklin, however successful in tracing or regulating the laws of the universe or the properties of matter—could lift the veil which shrouded the Deity, and concealed his wondrous attributes, purposes and plans from mortal vision. Here indeed was an unknown world—an unknown system—an awful mysterious uncertainty

about the state of man after death, and consequently about all his duties, hopes and fears in life.

Nor were serious and inquisitive men incurious or indifferent about this grand theme. Far otherwise. It was precisely the all-engrossing topic of their most earnest and persevering researches. Gladly would the learned and eloquent Tully, and a thousand others equally ardent and aspiring, have rent the veil, and sought the path to immortality in the brightest and purest elysium which mere human fancy had ever painted; but, in sorrow and disappointment, they descried new doubts and difficulties at every turn, and were forced to abandon the fruitless though fascinating pursuit. They sought, but never found, the road that leads to realms on high—to mansions in the skies.

The experiment then has been made—and made effectually, and on a grand scale—and during a period of many ages—and by men possessing all possible advantages. Human reason has been permitted to try her strength—to exert, to the very uttermost, all her boasted energies—and to reach the highest pinnacle of her proudest daring. She has ranged unfettered, and boldly traversed the darkest and the loftiest and the deepest recesses and corners and regions within the verge of her most ambitious and untiring and intrepid and courageous hardihood. Those ages of ignorance, idolatry and superstition "God winked at," or permitted for the wisest purposes. And among these, we may designate the one in question as not the least important. The utter insufficiency of human reason, in matters

of the highest and of everlasting concernment, has thus been most clearly demonstrated and universally proclaimed. And the same truth or fact is still as plainly taught in all pagan and anti-Christian lands at this very day. No Eastern sage—no Chinese Confucius—has yet arisen to dispel the clouds which obscured the moral vison of a Plato or Antoninus. Nor can the world produce an instance, in any age, of an individual who has accomplished the work which the enemies of revelation pronounce so easy. In every other department of knowledge or province of investigation, as we have seen, eminently gifted individuals have successfully laboured to extend the empire of man. While, upon the subject of religion, their wisdom has been always baffled: and their most specious and captivating theories have never proved satisfactory even to their boldest advocates or humblest votaries. Let infidel philosophy or ingenuity solve the problem as best it can. To us, the fact speaks volumes. It exhibits in bold relief, at once the incompetency of human reason, and the necessity and unspeakable value of divine revelation.

What man could not do or discover, God has done and revealed. He has given us a record, composed at various periods, and by sundry inspired individuals, expressly to teach us truths of which, otherwise, we must have remained forever ignorant. Why this revelation was at first partial or incomplete: or why, since its completion, it should have remained these eighteen hundred years comparatively unknown; or why it should be so little regarded even where it is accessible to all, or

why it should be so imperfectly obeyed by those who profess to believe and revere it, are questions which may be satisfactorily resolved by a reference to history, illumined by the pages of revelation. But to such queries, as they are usually propounded by superficial cavillers, we might reply by asking, why are not all men equally favoured in every other respect—in personal beauty, strength and health—in mental ability—in external fortune—in civil, political and social privileges—and in all other things which men covet or value upon earth? And what other reason could *they* assign for such differences and distinctions as universally obtain, than that such is the order of Providence, or the will of God, or, if they prefer it, the order of nature? Thus too, it may be, for aught they can urge, with revelation. Some have it; others have never heard of it. Some believe and obey it; others despise and reject it. The blessings of revelation, like all other blessings, whether of Providence or nature, are distributed among men agreeably to the same general laws. And the mere philosopher or the captious observer has no more ground to complain of injustice in the one case than in the other. If he can tell why one man is born a prince and another a beggar—one a master and another a slave—one white and another black—one rich and another poor—one to command armies, to control the councils of a nation by his wisdom or his eloquence, to fathom the depths of science, or to soar upon the wings of poetic inspiration, while others are doomed to ignorance, penury, contempt, misery, crime and infamy—he can be at no loss to solve all other mys-

teries in the providence of God. He can tell why some are born idolaters, while others are born Christians or in a Christian land. For, according to his creed, "time and chance happeneth [alike] to them all." (Eccles. ix. 11.)

But verily, by the aid of the Bible, we may proceed a little further in accounting for the apparently partial, and comparatively limited diffusion of revealed truth, than human philosophy has hitherto adventured in explaining the other acknowledged inequalities in the conditions and circumstances of our race.

All human discoveries and inventions, whenever or however achieved, are communicated and perpetuated by instruction. So it is with revelation. Although the truths which it involves could never have been compassed or conceived by human genius or sagacity; yet when made known by the Deity, they can be taught to others, just as human science is taught. Revelation, when imparted, becomes the property of man—a part of the common stock of knowledge—which must be communicated to others in the ordinary way: otherwise, a new revelation to every individual, or at least to every family or tribe, would be indispensable. In the order of Providence, human agency is the instrument employed to maintain and to transmit to posterity the knowledge and institutions of true religion. When men neglect this duty, they not only become irreligious themselves, but entail error and vice and false religion on future generations. Had men of old performed their duty, agreeably to the light which they enjoyed, no form of idolatry or superstition would ever have existed.

Human depravity, or wilful disobedience to the plain positive commands of God, is the sole cause of all the gross ignorance and moral darkness which have prevailed, or which now prevail in our world.

The history of man, as detailed in the Bible, amply illustrates this position, and places it beyond controversy. And from its study we may derive much practical instruction, apposite to the occasion on which we have convened.

1. Adam, the father of our race, was honoured with a revelation from Heaven, sufficient, doubtless, to have insured him the divine favour in this life and salvation in the next. It immediately, however, became the order of Providence, or, if you please, the order of nature, that he, as a parent, should become the guide and teacher of his posterity. Now, had he faithfully instructed his children, and had they faithfully instructed their children, and so on through successive generations, truth and piety would have been preserved, not merely in one family, but among all the nations of the antediluvian world. That such was not the happy result, was the fault—the criminal neglect—the wanton abuse of the divine goodness—the depraved rebellious spirit—and not the misfortune merely, of the ancient progenitors of mankind. Why posterity should, in any manner, be involved in the calamitous consequences of parental neglect, guilt or folly, human philosophy may explain as best she can: for the fact is notorious, and may be witnessed every day.

2. Again: Noah was equally, if not more highly favoured after the deluge. Every individual of his

family—that is, all the inhabitants of the new world,—must have been acquainted with the true religion, or with whatever revelation had as yet been vouchsafed to mankind. Had they been faithful in discharging their duty to their offspring, and had each subsequent generation been equally faithful, the world had been spared all the horrors and abominations of heathenism. But they also neglected and despised the truth, and suffered their children to grow up in nature's darkness.

3. To these two universal revelations, succeeded a partial and temporary dispensation. When the light of heavenly truth was nearly extinguished a second time, God was pleased to interpose in a special manner and for special purposes. From the calling of Abraham to the advent of Messiah, the nations were left to reap the fruits and to suffer the consequences of their ancestors' wickedness and neglect of duty. To the Israelites, a systematic revelation—a regular written code of laws and morals and religious rites—was granted; with an explicit command that parents should diligently instruct their children in every particular of it, and constrain their due observance of all its precepts and institutions; besides the provision of a numerous priesthood, and the almost uninterrupted communications of the divine will in various ways, and oftentimes by extraordinary prophets and messengers, expressly commissioned to warn, and to reclaim them from error. If such a people failed to preserve the truth, and to obey their Maker and constant Protector, we must concede the fault was their own. But they did fail most egregiously. So much so,

that, at times, they were as gross idolaters as any of their pagan neighbours, and as profoundly ignorant of the one living and true God, and of that revelation of which they still continued to be the exclusive depositaries. Here then, we have a fair specimen of human nature: and we find it then, as now in countries still more highly distinguished, stubborn, impracticable, unteachable, rebellious, self-sufficient, ever prone to forget God, to spurn his goodness, and to provoke his vengeance. If they were not duly instructed, there was criminal neglect somewhere. If they disregarded instruction, there was an equally criminal abuse of privilege. In either case, they justly merited the divine displeasure.

4. But when, in the fulness of time, the long expected and promised Messiah appeared, he presently commissioned his disciples to preach the gospel to every creature. The Gentile nations, as well as the Jews, were then favoured with a new revelation, and with all the blessings of the gospel of peace and reconciliation. Had all embraced the gospel to whom it was at first announced, and had these been zealous and faithful in the sacred cause, the truth as it is in Jesus would speedily have been propagated to the ends of the earth: and by the same faithful instrumentality it might have been transmitted, in all its original purity and beauty, to succeeding generations. But only a small portion of the people, in divers countries, heartily accepted the gospel, even under the ministry of inspired apostles. And very soon, the profession of Christianity became, to a great

extent, merely nominal. The usual consequences ensued. The gospel was debased and perverted by human inventions and pagan admixtures; until the people at length sunk into error and darkness, but little better than heathenism.—Until, in a few centuries, Mohammedan delusion spread over the most delightful regions of ancient Christendom—in Asia, in Africa, and in Europe. And there it has reigned ever since. While the Greek and Latin churches, which comprehended the remainder of the Christian world, exhibited the grossest corruptions both in doctrine and practice. Here also, as in all other cases, we are constrained to ascribe this dreadful degeneracy and ignorance exclusively to human neglect and disobedience. History, Scripture, reason, all concur in justifying the divine dispensations, and in condemning man as the voluntary author of every moral evil to which he has been, or is now subjected.

5. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Christian world was called on to reform. Many extraordinary and signally gifted individuals arose simultaneously to proclaim the truth, and to urge Christian men to return to the primitive simplicity and purity of the gospel. Had their warning voice been heard and obeyed, Christendom would have been redeemed. And the heralds of salvation would long since have found their way into all the habitations of cruelty, and have planted the standard of the cross in every corner of the habitable globe. But even Protestant Christians soon lost their first love: and the hallowed zeal of a Luther and his devoted associates ceased to animate the bosoms of their

successors. They fell out too among themselves: and wasted their energies in domestic broils and contests. They were presently divided into numerous hostile sects. And instead of issuing forth in one united invincible phalanx, against the common enemy, they waged war upon one another. Thus they continued, for three centuries, in their respective strongholds, watchful and jealous, and eagerly striving for the mastery over each other. Until they seem to have been given over to judicial blindness and hardness of heart. And Protestant Europe—with the Bible, as it were, but recently resuscitated, disinterred from the grave, emancipated from the thraldom of ages, and circulated in the language of the people—exhibited the strange and melancholy spectacle of universal bitterness, wrath and malice, of religious controversy, persecution, warfare and carnage. While evangelical charity seemed to have fled forever from the very churches which most loudly professed to feel and to honour her celestial spirit and catholic precepts.

I mean not to intimate that there were no exceptions. For God has never left himself without a witness, or without a seed to serve him upon our earth. I speak of the church generally—of the great mass of the people called Christians, and Protestant Christians. It is a memorable fact, that in Germany, the cradle of the Reformation, not a single missionary was ever regularly trained and sent forth by any of the established churches to preach the gospel to the heathen, anterior to the year 1829. It was not until the summer of that year, that the descendants of the Reformers appear to have listened

to the last great command of their divine Master, and to have commenced the work of evangelizing the nations. They then ordained four missionaries to labour on the coast of Africa, as the first fruits of their Christian zeal and charity.* The Moravian Brethren, however, in Germany, and the Methodists in England, had arisen in the mean time, and exhibited a glorious contrast to the death-like apathy of the national churches. These continued to sleep on—or to struggle against, what they esteemed, innovation and heresy and non-conformity—while the enemy was insidiously sapping the very foundations of the whole visible Christian edifice. Skepticism, infidelity and atheism, at length, gained the ascendant, and triumphed proudly,—upon the continent especially: and, towards the close of the last century, enacted a tragedy of horrors unparalleled in the history of human enormity. Such was the consummation of this last grand apostasy from the truth. It remains for posterity to decide whether we, of the present day, shall have proved wiser and more faithful and more trustworthy than the generations which have preceded us.—Whether we shall bring down blessings or curses upon their heads. For, unquestionably:

6. A new spirit has marked the age in which we live. It is distinguished, in many respects, far beyond every other since the apostolic era. Christian charity is beginning to develop her genuine character. Christian people are beginning to feel and to acknowledge that the Sav-

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* See New York Observer of Nov. 7, 1829.

iour's valedictory command: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," [Mark, xvi. 15,] is addressed to them, collectively and individually. And wo to those who slight or seek to evade it! It is impossible to retain the blessings of the gospel in any community, large or small, where no active and faithful efforts are made to impart the same blessings to others. The gospel cannot be monopolized or hid in a corner: and those who hazard the profane and impotent attempt, are sure, in the end, to lose themselves what they so covetously withhold. The very spirit of the gospel impels its friends to communicate it to the ignorant and the needy, to the labouring and heavy laden, to the guilty and the perishing. They cannot possibly do otherwise, without giving infallible evidence that they are but enemies in disguise. "Freely ye have received, freely give," (Matt. x. 8,) is inscribed, in golden capitals, upon every page of the Christian charter. To believe the gospel, and yet to be indifferent or backward or slothful in recommending it, and in furnishing it to the destitute, according to our ability, involves a palpable contradiction. And if any one lesson, more distinctly than another, can be learned from the history of the Church and of mankind, it is this, namely: that those who neglect the duty of teaching and extending, as far as practicable, *the true religion*, do invariably incur the severest frowns of Heaven, and expose their posterity to the most awful calamities—including always either the utter forfeiture or the most deplorable perversion of the truth itself.

The command then has gone forth: "Preach the gospel to every creature." This command is binding on all those who already enjoy the privileges of the gospel. It is their duty to send it where it is not. It is our duty to do this.

It is the duty of every Christian church, however organized, or however feeble in comparative numbers and resources, to be emphatically a missionary church: and to exert her utmost energies in spreading the light of evangelical truth over the dark regions of paganism and error and false religion. I concede that missionary societies have, within the last fifty years, been voluntarily constituted by benevolent individuals among several of the European national churches—particularly those of England and Scotland—and that these have done much good. But none of the said churches have done their duty hitherto, or even a tithe of it. What powerful established church, for example, has contributed in missionary labours and sacrifices an amount bearing any relative proportion to those furnished and sustained by the Baptists in India,—or by the "United Brethren," since they have been known as a distinct Christian denomination?

"It is worthy of particular observation, that when the Moravians sent forth their first missionaries, the congregation consisted only of about six hundred poor despised exiles; yet this inconsiderable company made such noble and extensive exertions for the conversion of the heathen, as reflects not only the highest honour on themselves, but indelible disgrace on all the rest of the Christian

world. In the short period of eight or nine years, they sent missionaries to Greenland, to St. Thomas, to St. Croix, to Surinam, to the Rio de Berbice, to the Indians of North America, to the Negroes of South Carolina, to Lapland, to Tartary, to Algiers, to Guinea, to the Cape of Good Hope, and to the Island of Ceylon."*

Had I time and space to recount the labours of these self-denying and most efficient missionary Brethren, during the last hundred years (namely, since 1733:) how humbling to our own American Presbyterian Church would not be the contrast thus forced upon our vision and brought home to our conscience? Have we done as much as they? Ought we not to have done ten-thousandfold more than they? What meaneth that saying of our Lord: "Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required"? (Luke, xii. 48.) What has been the result among ourselves of this long continued apathy and uncharitableness and disobedience? To what cause shall we ascribe the present unhappy divisions, which seem to threaten the dissolution of our whole ecclesiastical fabric? Why is it that Christian brethren—ay, members of one faith and consecrated to the same holy service—are eying each other with suspicion and jealousy and hatred? Why is it that we have turned the weapons of our spiritual warfare against one another; and have already enlisted under party leaders for the purpose of mutual vexation or of downright extermination?

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* Brown's History of Missions, vol. i. p. 288.

I venture to say that this deplorable and most unchristian aspect which our church has been made to assume before a scoffing world, is owing chiefly to our culpable disregard of the Master's command to go forth against the common enemy, and to achieve new conquests where his sacred banner had never been unfurled, or where the light of revelation has long since been extinguished.

But it is not my purpose to dwell upon this painful and humiliating theme. Rather let us weep and mourn over the desolations of our beloved and bleeding Zion. Let us seek to renew our broken covenant with the Lord, whose Spirit we have grieved and dishonoured: that he may be graciously pleased to heal our backslidings, and to restore concord and wisdom to our distracted councils, and to endow us richly with that invincible ministerial fidelity which characterized the noble army of martyrs and apostles of old, that we may henceforth be recognized, by friends and foes, as the devoted heralds and soldiers of the cross, without fear and without reproach.

Such, if I mistake not, is the simple and only adequate remedy for the great evil which we all perceive and lament. It is repentance—reformation—mutual forgiveness and forbearance—immediate obedience to the law of love—a holy concentration of all our faculties and efforts upon the one grand enterprise of evangelizing the world. With this paramount object constantly in view, we should soon forget our domestic controversies and unprofitable speculations and exasperating recriminations, and all the selfish schemes of a narrow sectarian policy or worldly ambition; and

heartily co-operate with the benevolent spirit of the age in endeavouring to build up Immanuel's kingdom among all nations. Let us look without and abroad upon the ignorant and wretched millions of our guilty race, let our generous sympathies be directed towards our perishing kindred and brethren according to the flesh, and let our hearts and purses and labours and prayers be consecrated to their rescue and salvation: and we shall soon stand forth a regenerated, purified, peaceful, harmonious, efficient, missionary church — strong in faith, beautiful in charity, mighty in good works, victorious and triumphant in every conflict — honoured, beloved and blessed by all the saints on earth and by all the redeemed in heaven.

ON THE DIVINE GOVERNMENT.

[NEWTOWN, LONG ISLAND, 1811.]

ON THE DIVINE GOVERNMENT.*

The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice.—*Psalm* xcvii. 1.

This text, agreeably to the received translation, naturally divides itself into two parts.

I. The Lord reigneth.

And therefore:

II. Let the earth rejoice.

Your serious attention is respectfully invited to a few remarks upon each of these topics.

I. The Lord reigneth. Here, according to the obvious import of the words, the fact of the divine government and providence is asserted.

In every age, and in every part of the habitable earth, the great mass of the people have entertained a belief in the existence of a superior and controlling power of some kind. Of a Power to which they were not only subordinate, but on which they were dependent. The idea seems to be inseparable from our nature. It is one of those original first truths, if I may so term it, which it were unnatural and irrational to reject. It is a truth which demands the exercise of much ingenious sophistry,

* Preached first at Newtown, in 1811.

or of more than ordinary depravity, or of both conjoined, in order to eradicate and banish it from the mind. It is seriously doubted, indeed, whether any, after all, have thoroughly succeeded in the attempt. It is acknowledged however that a few have professed to disbelieve the existence of a Deity. A few have advocated this monstrous sentiment with much talent and ingenuity, in order to perplex, mislead, and proselyte others; whether they were really convinced of it themselves or not. But passing by such men, whose opinions are no less absurd than wicked: we maintain that the admission of a supreme independent first cause of all things necessarily implies, or consequentially involves the admission of a divine government and providence. None but atheists can consistently deny such a providence. For we conceive that there is but little difference between the man who affirms that God takes no notice, no direction of human affairs, and the man who foolishly and impiously asserts that there is no God.

Admitting then that God is, and that he governs the world which he has created with perfect wisdom and equity; it may not be unprofitable to investigate a little more fully the nature, extent, and particularity of the divine providence as exercised over us his intelligent and accountable creatures.

On this subject there has been much controversy; and much diversity of opinion still obtains. Not because there is any peculiar difficulty in the case, but because men are indisposed to all divine truth. They are by nature at enmity with God, and with all that he does

and requires. No wonder then that his moral government should be variously interpreted and modified to suit the corrupt views of the unworthy subjects of it.

The Lord reigns: Not in that lax general way which, many heathens, and not a few free thinking Christians have supposed. Who, not having the hardihood utterly to disclaim a divine superintendence of some kind, do yet maintain what virtually amounts to the same thing. They say that the universe, in all its extent and complex variety, since it proceeded from the hands of the Creator, has possessed some internal inherent power or law by which it continues to exist, and to fulfil the ends for which it was destined, without needing or experiencing any further divine influence or agency whatever.

This system of mechanical order or necessity, by which all events are supposed to occur in a regular, uniform, undeviating train, as effect follows cause, seems, in the view of its advocates, to give a kind of independence to our world, by keeping the Deity, as it were, out of sight; and, in some measure, ignorant of what is going forward in these lower parts of his dominions. They flatter themselves that they are thus set at liberty—that their conduct is not observed—that they may live as they list. They do not indeed pretend that God cannot behold them, or that he cannot punish them. But, according to their plan, he is too great a Being—too highly exalted—too far removed—to condescend to notice the insignificant concerns of frail short-lived mortals, who are as nothing in his sight.

But while such a character of Jehovah is at once in-

consistent and degrading, it is contradictory also to the plainest declarations of Scripture, and to our own experience. It is the uniform doctrine of revelation, that, throughout the universe, nothing happens without the permission and control of God. Here we learn that he is everywhere present. That his agency, his power, his wisdom, his goodness are to be recognized in all things, both small and great. "He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth." (Dan, iv. 35.) "Hell is naked before him, and destruction hath no covering: He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing. The pillars of heaven tremble, and are astonished at his reproof. He divideth the sea with his power, and by his understanding he smiteth through the proud." (Job, xxvi. 6.) "He clothes the heavens with blackness, and makes sackcloth their covering." (Isa. l. 3.)

But nothing is so minute and inconsiderable as to be beneath his regard. While he guides the sun and the planets in their courses; while he regulates the movements of millions of worlds to us unknown; while his way is in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet; while he rebuketh the sea, and drieth up the rivers; while he ruleth among the empires of the earth, stilling the ragings of the waters and the tumults of the people; he, at the same time, condescends to men of low estate; and graciously watches over the humble good man, who in the obscurity of a cottage, cheerfully spends his days in serving and honouring Him

from whom his comforts flow. The hairs of his head are all numbered, and not a sparrow falleth to the ground without his Father's notice. (Matt. x. 29.) "In his hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind." (Job, xii. 10.) His goodness is diffused throughout creation. His eye surveys, and his arm upholds the meanest insect as well as the most exalted seraph. His bounty is shared, not only by grateful and obedient angels, but by ungrateful and rebellious men. "He looketh to the ends of the earth, and seeth under the whole heaven." (Job, xxviii. 24.) "The eyes of the Lord are in every place beholding the evil and the good." (Prov. xv. 3.) "Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord." (Jer. xxiii. 23.)

Such are the wisdom and power and beneficence of that God, whose character is unfolded to us in the Bible.

Whatever notions vain man may entertain of dignity and grandeur; however unbecoming he may think it for the majesty of heaven to stoop to inferior beings, to regulate events and notice objects which appear so trivial and contemptible in his eyes; yet God's thoughts are not as his thoughts. God does not measure greatness by the same standard, or the same principles, by which he is guided in his judgment. He may despise a fellow-worm, who, in the sight of God, is incomparably his superior. He may be proud of distinctions which are destined to

prove his ruin. So little does he know of what is good for him. So insensible is he of his own absolute dependence on God, and his comparative insignificance among the objects of the divine favour and protection.

Mind, no less than matter, is subject to the control of God. In what manner, indeed, he interposes in human affairs; by what means he influences the thoughts and counsels of men, so as to leave them perfectly free in action; or, in other words, how we can reconcile divine providence with the liberty of the creature; we acknowledge ourselves incompetent to explain. Nor is it necessary that we should. It cannot be expected that our feeble limited reason should be able clearly to comprehend a subject so intimately allied with Deity.—A subject which embraces the plans and purposes of infinite and eternal wisdom. The contrary would be much more extraordinary: and therefore it is presumption to covet knowledge which our natures are totally disqualified to receive. The *fact* however we know: the mode or manner is beyond our reach, and altogether inscrutable.

If there be a God, he must be the Creator of all things. And if the Creator, it is equally necessary, from the very perfection of his nature, that he should be their Preserver and Governor. Now we can form no consistent or adequate conception of a supreme Governor of the world, whose government does not extend to all objects and to all events without exception or limitation. If we do not admit a particular providence, then we remove the whole foundation of worship and

of prayer. The Almighty, agreeably to this plan, would be no more than an indifferent spectator of the conduct of his subjects. All, both good and bad, would be regarded with an equal eye, however various and unequal their actions.

But though the ways and counsels of God are wonderful and past finding out; yet to a pious observing mind, the dealings of his providence are not only manifest, but, in the highest degree, consolatory and grateful. Such a man is at no loss for proofs of a divine agency in whatever comes to pass. He is conscious of it in his own case. He beholds it in all things around him. What men of the world ascribe to accident, chance, or fortune, he unreservedly and piously refers to Providence. Even when the divine dispensations are to himself wholly unaccountable—when apparently severe and unmerited—instead of indulging a doubting and murmuring spirit, he humbly resolves all into the wisdom and sovereignty of God.

There are seasons when all men acknowledge, because they *feel*, that there is an everlasting Providence. There are seasons when the most hardened and skeptical are constrained to make this acknowledgment, if not to the world, at least to their own hearts. And we need not recur to very extraordinary cases for an exemplification of our meaning. Every man will find, on candidly reviewing his past life, many instances of his entire conviction at the time of his dependence on a higher power. He will recollect how frequently his wisest plans and measures have been thwarted, and his

fairest prospects blasted, by the merest trifle in appearance? but which he could neither prevent nor foresee. He will recollect also, that, when permitted to execute his purposes and to gain the object of his labours and desires, he has discovered to his mortification that it yielded not the anticipated fruition—that he had been labouring for that which satisfieth not—that his bosom still continued a stranger to peace and felicity. And why was this the case? Was it because he was the sport of fortune—the wretched subject of a blind fatality? Or, rather, was it not because he was a subject of the divine government, and because he sought his pleasure in pursuits and objects which God has determined shall never yield any?

External circumstances can contribute but little to happiness independently of a suitable frame and temper of mind. And this favourable disposition of mind we do not naturally possess. Sin has deprived us of the capacity for pure substantial enjoyment. We have neither the wisdom to ascertain what is good for us, nor ability to procure that good when known. And hence those numberless disappointments which continually testify that the way of man is not in himself—that he is not the arbiter of his own lot.

Many a man, when in imminent and awful danger of death,—as, for instance, when at sea in a storm—in a city visited by famine, or pestilence, or sword, or fire—or when languishing on a bed of pain and disease,—has felt an irresistible conviction that God only could rescue and preserve him; however libertine may have been his

previous conduct and professions. At such seasons, men have no inclination to doubt that the Lord God omnipotent reigneth, even though the conviction fill them with terror and despair.

But, in the second place:

II. The wise and righteous government of Jehovah, as administered by the eternal Son, who hath pardons to confer on the most guilty, is a source of joy even to the sinful inhabitants of the earth.

God, viewed merely as a Sovereign and a Judge, without the intervention of a Mediator, could be contemplated by rebellious creatures only with sentiments of hopeless dread and horror.

When therefore the earth is called on to rejoice because the Lord reigneth, it is evident from the nature of the case and from the context, that the Psalmist had a special reference to the reign of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of the world—the reign of that heavenly King whose birth was celebrated by angels, and announced with emphasis as "joy to the world."

Jesus, the Messiah, the Prince of peace, the Captain of salvation, reigneth; therefore let the earth rejoice. Or, the earth shall rejoice.

By the earth is meant chiefly and primarily the church of Christ—the people of God in every age and nation—the ransomed of the Lord—the chosen followers and worshippers of the Lamb. These, and only these, have reason to rejoice in the being, perfections, and righteous government of the eternal God. What-

ever temporal favours others may receive and enjoy from Heaven's infinite bounty, yet better were it for them had they never been born. It matters not how much they may gain of earth's fairest possessions, or how long they may revel in the sunshine of this world's smile; yet, if enemies of their Maker at last, they will have an eternity to deplore their wretched fate as the subjects of the divine government.

In contemplating the divine dispensations towards mankind, we are ever to keep in view the grand design and ultimate end of them all. They all have a direct reference to the well-being, protection, establishment, and prosperity of the true church,—or of God's peculiar people of every age, and kindred, and tongue, and nation under heaven. This fact furnishes the only clue to what would otherwise appear dark, mysterious and inexplicable.

Wicked men regard all human events as happening by chance—or as the result of human skill and wisdom and contrivance, or of human folly and ignorance and weakness—and as terminating in the apparent good or evil which they occasion to particular communities or individuals. They see not the hand of God in any of these things—nor do they ever dream of the grand purpose which they tend to accomplish. It is no wonder therefore that they speculate absurdly upon them. The wisest philosophers go not beyond this exterior surface—these obvious visible occurrences and effects—which present to their reason no marks or evidences of a divine agency, or of an ulterior and nobler end. With them,

all is confusion, or all is mystery, or there is no God, or if there be, he leaves his creatures to act their part and die, without deigning to interpose or to direct. They behold no beauty, no order, no symmetry, no harmony, no design, in all the mighty and varied movements of the human family. They see nations and empires rising and falling, and fighting and conquering. They admire the good fortune of the one, and pity the hard lot of another. But the secret spring and the providential bearing of the whole, they do not conjecture. This hidden light never reaches the eye of our world's philosophy.

It is in the Bible, and nowhere else, that we learn how all things are ordered and overruled for good to them that fear God. It is here we trace the divinity in all events both great and small. It is here we see unfolded the great purposes and plans of infinite wisdom in all the march of the human race from the creation to the end of time. Here we discover the peculiar, extraordinary and constant care which Jehovah exercises over his people. And how the wicked are made the instruments of his power to promote, in one way or another, this main, leading design. From Adam to Noah, all that we know of our guilty race was recorded to teach us this important and instructive lesson. The old world was destroyed by a deluge that the righteous might be safe, and that piety might flourish; and that the justice of Almighty God in the punishment of the guilty might be manifest in all the earth. The history of the new

world—of individuals and of nations, of the patriarchs and of the tribes of Israel, and of the heathen nations around them, so far as they are noticed in the book of inspiration—points to the same great end. Here we see why the good man occasionally suffers, and why the wicked prosper and triumph. Why a tyrant is permitted to live and to oppress—why a conqueror is suffered to lay waste cities and kingdoms—why a Nebuchadnezzar, and a Cyrus, and an Alexander were commissioned to their work of death and desolation. God had an object to accomplish by their agency of which they never thought or dreamt. And thus it has been, and still is, in every similar case. Of many a conquering hero, whom this world delights to honour, it may be said now, as was said of one of the proudest of Asia's ancient monarchs by the Spirit of truth and prophecy: "O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few." (Isaiah, x. 5, etc.)

The pious man, who reads the progress of the human race in his Bible, and sees how God has directed their course so as to bring about his glorious plans of mercy, and grace, and righteousness, and judgment, learns to apply the same principle in his interpretation of all the dealings of Providence towards his creatures in the ages

which have since passed away, and to the events which are daily taking place.

In the fulness of time, the Messiah appeared upon earth to accomplish all that had been predicted of him, and all to which he had been appointed. His kingdom has been established in our world: and the world's opposition has been made subservient to its increase and stability. The Lord reigneth: and the whole earth shall yet be filled with his glory, and rejoice in his government. However dark the aspect of Providence as regards the prosperity of Zion, still the grand machinery is in operation that will eventually disperse every cloud, and usher in the bright day of Immanuel's peaceful and universal sway. To this glorious consummation, the pride, the ambition, the unbelief, the cruelty, and all the unhallowed passions and purposes of men, will be made to contribute.

Kings and emperors may form their plans of conquest and dominion—they may destroy and build up—they may do valiantly and riot in the spoils of innocence, and hedge themselves within the mightiest bulwarks of human strength, and vainly boast of the great Babylon which they have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of their power, and for the honour of their majesty—still they are but acting an humble part in the grand drama of Providence which is about to develop scenes and transactions, and a moral beauty and purity and harmony, which they never contemplated, and of which they will not participate.

The Christian spectator, therefore, with the Bible in

his hands, looks calmly abroad upon this busy theatre of mortal daring and achievement, and remembers that the Lord reigneth, and that his church is safe; that it shall prosper; that he will overturn and overturn, and go forth conquering and to conquer, until he put all his enemies under his feet. Let the church of Christ then rejoice. No weapon formed against her shall prosper. Neither the malice of men, nor the gates of hell shall prevail against her. Let Zion put on her beautiful garments, for Jesus is the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace, and the government is upon his shoulder. (Isaiah, ix. 6.)

With these desultory and very inadequate remarks upon the divine Providence as exercised over the world, and especially as it has a reference to the prosperity and ultimate triumph of the true church of God, I proceed to the notice of a few particulars by way of inference and as a practical improvement of the doctrine.

1st. In contemplating the fact that the Lord reigneth, and ruleth over all, we ought to be resigned under all the dispensations of Providence, and learn to be contented with our lot in life whatever it may be.

We are naturally prone to murmur and to find fault, to covet something and to aspire to something which we have not, and which we cannot lawfully and fairly attain. This is not only criminal, as implying a want of filial confidence in our heavenly Father who knoweth our frame, and who ever dealeth kindly and graciously with those who trust in him; but it is unwise and absurd as rational beings, because it creates

to ourselves uneasiness and misery which cannot be remedied.

If human philosophy or reason teach us anything in regard to human conduct worth knowing, it is to endure with calmness and patience and fortitude whatever we cannot control, or remove, or meliorate. We have heard of a stoical indifference—of a philosophical submission—of a rational courage—and verily, if we had no better guide, no superior principle, no higher object or nobler end to aim at, than mere human wisdom presents, it would be worth our while to apply to her for all the aid and light which she can give to help us onward through this checkered scene of folly, pain and sorrow. We have much to encounter from within and from without. Active, enterprising, ambitious, proud, vain, sensitive—whichever way we turn, we meet with enemies, with obstacles, with frowns, with opposition, with disasters, with mortification, with treachery, with deceit, fraud, violence, persecution. We are not suffered to go straight forward to the object of our desires. Our pursuits interfere with the plans of others, as restless and as grasping as ourselves. The prize for which we struggle is sought by thousands, it may be, who will bear it from us in triumph at the moment we were sure of its possession. Disappointment therefore is more likely to await us than success in almost every course which this world holds out to its votaries. Besides, complete success is no guarantee for peace of mind. This after all is independent of external fortune. So says human philosophy: and to her specious logic we have often listened with delight, as

if she could rescue us from the labyrinth of toil and wretchedness in which we had been wandering—as if she held out to us the magic thread of Ariadne which would conduct us safely to the door of final deliverance, and to the haven of peace and rest and joy. But no: all was delusion. She promised much, but accomplished nothing. The heart she could not reach. She inculcated many a goodly lesson; and sagely demonstrated the vanity and emptiness of all sublunary things, and checked indeed our ardour in the pursuit of them; but she left the inward fountain as turbid and troubled as ever. She imparted no calming, soothing, healthful spirit —none of that cheering radiance which adorns and betokens a contented mind. A hermit or a misanthrope she might form. But an amiable, virtuous, benevolent, happy, active dispenser of the charities of social or public life—a self-denied, humble, faithful doer of good, who can use the world and not abuse it, who is contented and at the same time fully employed in some lawful scheme of usefulness to the extent of his powers and opportunities —such a man it is not within her province to create.

But the Lord reigneth. He has given us our talents, appointed us our place and sphere of action, and bid us occupy till he come. To him we stand or fall. To him we are accountable: and if we commit our way to him, he will certainly lead us in peace and safety to *the rest* which remaineth for the people of God. If we can be assured of this—assured that all will be right at last—assured that an eternal heaven will be ours—then we have every possible inducement to be satisfied with our

present lot, and every possible encouragement to march fearlessly forward, in the name of the Lord, through whatever trials and tribulations and difficulties may befall us.

We have no just ground for complaints or murmurings. None for envy, strife or jealousy. We may witness the prosperity and elevation of others whom we esteem our inferiors; and imagine or be tempted to imagine that our peculiar merit and claims are overlooked. Here we mistake, probably, both our own virtues and qualifications, and the real character of the distinctions to which we think ourselves entitled. We deserve less than we supposed; or the thing desired might have proved a curse instead of a blessing. We therefore bow submissive to the will of our heavenly Father—acknowledge the wisdom, the equity, and the kindness of his dealings—and resolve to go on our way rejoicing in the Lord as our guide, benefactor, and everlasting portion.

That there must be great diversities in the external conditions of men, we cannot doubt. The fact is, and ever has been so. We cannot all be first, or highest, or richest, or wisest. But though men cannot be equal or alike in every respect, yet all may enjoy a great measure of happiness. Every station possesses its peculiar comforts and advantages. Our heavenly Father knows our abilities infinitely better than we do ourselves: and he appoints our lot accordingly. He prescribes the duties which we are to execute, and marks out the path in which we are to seek for honour and immortality.

Could we extend our vision through the whole course of life to its termination—trace its connexion with our future and eternal destiny—we should be constrained to acknowledge that Providence had assigned to us the very place, and ordered all the circumstances of our earthly pilgrimage precisely as we would have wished them. Let faith, then, supply the defect of knowledge and experience, and lead us to repose in peace upon the goodness and mercy of our covenant God and Saviour who will never leave us nor forsake us. Let us be satisfied: and each in the spirit of humble gratitude unite with the Psalmist in saying: "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance, and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage. Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." (Ps. xvi. 5, 11.)

2d. The Lord reigneth. What encouragement—what consolation—what support—does not this truth yield to the real Christian under all the trials and vicissitudes of life? It is true, that, "although affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground, yet man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upwards." (Job, v. 6, 7.) "Many are the afflictions of the righteous; but the Lord delivereth him out of them all." (Ps. xxxiv. 19.) "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." (Heb. xii. 6.)

We have great need of these seasonable warnings and

paternal chastisements—more need of them than we are apt to imagine. Ever prone to forget God, and to go astray from him, we require frequent admonitions and corrections to bring us back, and to keep us near to our Father's house. Afflictions are intended for the cultivation of virtue. They serve to mortify our unruly passions, to wean us from the world, and to prepare us for heaven. If we would reign with Christ we must learn to suffer with him. We must take up our cross and follow him through *evil* as well as through good report. It has been frequently remarked by Christian writers, and proved by a thousand facts in every age, that, "the best affections of the heart, the noblest graces of the soul, the most exalted virtues of life, take their rise, are nurtured, and matured in the school of adversity."

But the Lord will not always chide, neither will he keep his anger forever. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are dust." (Ps. ciii. 13, 14.) This is a consideration connected with the ordinary dealings of Providence, which ought to yield us joy in the midst of trouble. Good men are often brought low, and exposed to the scorn and derision of a vain misjudging world. But we frequently see them come forth from the fiery furnace as gold seven times refined. The stories of Job, of Joseph, of Moses, of David, of Daniel, and of many others, as recorded in Scripture, present us with a happy illustration of this truth. When in distress therefore, let us recur to the Bible, and there survey those hidden springs of divine

Providence which directed the saints of old through scenes of suffering and peril almost without a parallel in the history of human calamity; but which served to prove, and purify, and elevate their character—to prepare them, perhaps, for greater happiness and more eminent usefulness than they could otherwise have attained—and finally for brighter mansions and more glorious crowns in the Father's everlasting kingdom.

The more we read and comprehend of the precious truths of the sacred volume, the more cordially shall we acquiesce in the divine government; and the less shall we be inclined to question its wisdom and equity in cases which may not appear so plain to our limited understandings. We shall thus acquire the habit—and a most important and invaluable acquisition it is—a habit of constant submission to the will and unwavering confidence in the goodness of God.

When we behold the earth filled with moral evil and disorder—when we see bad men exalted, while the good man's lot is bitterness and pain—let us remember that he who caused light to arise out of darkness and order from confusion, can and will, in his own good time, correct these seeming irregularities. He can make the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder of wrath he will restrain. (Ps. lxxvi. 10.) Rejoice then, Christian brethren, for we have an high priest who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; and who was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. (Heb. iv. 15.) Rejoice, for the Lord Jehovah Jesus

reigneth: and he is the rock of your salvation, and a very present help in trouble.

This life, be it remembered, is not a state of recompense, but of trial. Therefore let none abuse the doctrine of a particular providence by judging of the characters of men from their external circumstances. This is not a fair criterion. The sun shines, and the rain falls upon the just and the unjust. The virtuous and the vicious share alike the common bounties of providence, though they do by no means participate equal proportions of real happiness. For there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked. While the truly pious, in the extremity of apparent distress and bereavement and adversity, do often and may always enjoy a peace of mind which passeth knowledge—a joy unspeakable and full of glory.

3d. The Lord frequently directs the course of his children in a manner which appears to them, at the time, altogether mysterious and inexplicable.

The path of duty is often difficult to ascertain. We are at a loss—in doubt—in suspense—what to do, in a particular crisis. We watch the openings and leadings of Providence. Many considerations incline us to one course. Other considerations point to a different. Our friends in whom we confide, and all the world, so far as we can judge, tell us what we ought to choose. We presently agree with them; and nearly resolve to yield to the common voice. Perhaps it is some post of honour or profit which we are solicited to assume, or to relinquish, or to exchange. We see difficulties which others

do not perceive—objections which they cannot comprehend. We pray for direction. We are still in the dark. We seek for light—and finally, a train of unforeseen circumstances, or what seems a mere accident decides us to adopt a measure or system of conduct which every one condemns as rash, imprudent, and altogether indefensible. We incur the charge of weakness, of cowardice, or presumption. The world contemplate us with astonishment, or with pity, or with contempt. We begin to reproach and to condemn ourselves. When too late to retreat, we see, or imagine we see, our mistake. We think we ought to have done otherwise. We blame our own decision, and feel that we have been rash and precipitate. But, by and by, we are enabled more clearly to discern the hand of God in the whole transaction. We find that our way was directed by unerring wisdom. That our after misgivings were no evidence that, at the time of our decision, we were wrong. We then acted according to the light which we then possessed. And, in due time, we are led to admire and to adore the goodness of our unseen guide and friend and benefactor, who constrained us against our inclinations, to pursue the very course which our reason and conscience at last cordially approve. Cases of this dubious kind are oftentimes extremely painful and perplexing to the most vigilant, prayerful and conscientious Christians. They frequently occur: and they expose those who are thus tried to much obloquy and reproach from the world. But they teach us a profitable lesson; and bring us to a more humble and habitual submission to the divine

guidance—to a more becoming distrust of our own judgment and inclination—and to a more just estimate of human opinion and applause. If we do right—if we follow the leadings of Providence as we apprehend them at the time, after mature deliberation and prayer—we may safely leave the issue to the Lord; let the world think, or say, or do what they will. Our duty is to obey God rather than man. The Lord reigneth: and we acquiesce in his righteous dispensations, and rejoice in all his doings.

4th. The Lord reigneth: Hence our encouragement to labour for the spread of the everlasting gospel. When we contemplate the actual condition of the great mass of mankind—their wickedness, superstition, blindness, prejudices, hostility to truth and holiness—we are ready to despond, and to imagine that all human efforts to Christianize the world will be utterly unavailing and nugatory. By no means. The divine promises and providence assure us that the whole earth shall yet rejoice. That the gospel of peace shall be preached to every creature. That the prayers, and offerings, and sacrifices, and exertions of the faithful in behalf of their perishing fellow-men, shall be blessed. That at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil. ii. 10, 11.)

Let ministers of the gospel—let missionaries—let all Christians labour and pray, and never faint or despair. The heathen shall yet be given to the Son for an inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession. The Jews, with the fulness of the Gentiles, shall

be brought into the fold of the great Shepherd. The Bible shall be read in every tongue. The gospel shall be proclaimed to all people. Temples to the living God shall be erected in every land. "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose." (Isa. xxxv. 1.) Peace and righteousness and joy and charity shall prevail throughout the world. "The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof." (Ps. xcvii. 1.)

5th. Wicked men after all do not habitually believe in a divine providence; and they have no reason to rejoice in it. Although the truth of the doctrine will not be formally called in question by men generally who live under the light of the gospel, yet it is practically rejected by all who have not submitted to the divine will through the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit leading them to Christ as the way of life, and salvation, and sincere obedience.

It is no matter what men profess on this subject. While they deliberately indulge in known sin, they do not believe that God beholds their actions. They do not believe it, I mean, when in health and apparent prosperity. But if they are always dependent on God, they are surely not more so in seasons of sickness and danger than at other times. Their actions however prove that they think otherwise. The most abandoned profligates, for instance, cannot dream of indulging in sinful pleasures when death stares them in the face.

The profane swearer ventures not then to take the name of his God in vain. The drunkard loathes the proffered cup which he had never refused before. The knave does not then meditate schemes of fraud upon his neighbour. The arm of the murderer is stayed. The career of ambition and avarice is suspended. And why? Why do men now fear to commit the very sins which, but a little before, they esteemed quite harmless and indifferent; and in which they sought their chief good? Why do they, for the first time, stand in awe of heaven; and, as it were, encompassed by the majesty of that providence which they had hitherto slighted? It is because danger has, in some degree, brought them to their senses, and to a belief that God is verily the witness of their crimes — a belief, which, had it been entertained at all times, would have effectually prevented the commission of those crimes.

Therefore, if men live without God in the world—if they neglect his ordinances and violate his commandments — if they dare do in secret what they would be ashamed or afraid to do openly in the sight of men—we are warranted in affirming that they have no clear conviction of an everywhere present God, who notices, and who will bring to light and to judgment the most hidden purposes and devices of the heart. They do not, in fact, believe that there is an all-wise, overruling providence: or, at least, that this providence is particular, extending to all things and to all events.

Such men, while they continue in sin, have no part

nor lot in the Redeemer's Kingdom. They are the enemies of God: and sentence of condemnation hath gone forth against them; sentence of everlasting banishment from the presence of the Lord, and from all that is good and holy and cheering and happy; sentence of eternal sorrow, and remorse, and anguish, and lamentation, and despair! Ah, my friends, little do you know—little can you know of the horrors and agonies of an existence shut up in the prison of eternal despair! Yet, this is your doom, as surely as the Lord liveth, if you die at enmity with him.

You may indulge a few more years in foolish mirth and levity; you may sport with the terrors of eternal perdition; wanton in all the delights of guilty pleasure; make a mock of sin, of death, of judgment; arm yourselves with all the weapons which infidelity and skepticism can furnish; and take your stand of bold defiance against the mighty King of heaven: and what then? Are you safe? Will you be safe at last? This is the momentous question for you to answer, and to answer fairly and honestly. No matter what you may venture, for a few days, to do with seeming impunity—no matter what ingenious sophistry you may employ to delude your reason and to stifle the voice of conscience—no matter in what round of dissipation and folly you may contrive to drown reflection and to forget your immortal destiny—no matter how courageously or how rashly you may dare to brave the vengeance of the Almighty when you imagine it afar off. The great question is: Are you

prepared to die? prepared to enter the world of spirits? prepared to stand before the bar of eternal justice? prepared to receive sentence according to the deeds done in the body? prepared to go down to the chambers of the blackness of darkness, where the worm dieth not, and where the fire of divine wrath is never quenched?

The Lord reigneth: What a consideration this to guilty dying rebels! What terror does it not awaken in the bosom of every immortal accountable creature whenever it fairly meets his view! The Lord reigneth. His eye is now, is ever upon you. He searcheth the hearts: he trieth the reins. He cannot be deceived: he will not be mocked. You cannot escape his notice, or flee from his avenging arm. He is here in the midst of you. His presence fills this house. He is with you in all the dark retreats, and coverts, and haunts of vice and revelry to which you resort to shun the eye of mortals, and to escape the censure of human wisdom and virtue which you are ashamed and afraid to encounter. Go where you will, do what you will, the omniscient God beholds you, and he will bring all your deeds of darkness to light. Yes, you must appear before him in judgment. You must yet behold that terrible Majesty which you now insult, and profane, and despise.

In such a state of hostility to your Maker, and with such a prospect before you, we cannot bid you rejoice. Weeping and sorrow and bitterness and mourning better become you. Put on sackcloth and ashes: humble yourselves and repent before the Lord: and cry day and

night for that mercy and pardon and righteousness and salvation which he only can bestow.

Jesus reigneth. He is the King, and Lord, and Judge. He holds in his hand a sceptre of mercy, and is graciously inviting the guilty and wretched wanderer to return and live. He calls upon you, my hearers, to forsake your sins, to believe in his name, to submit to his government, and to rejoice forever in the unspeakable glories of his great salvation.

THE CONDUCT OF THE UNBELIEVING

UNDER THE

WARNINGS OF THE GOSPEL.

[NEWTOWN, LONG ISLAND, 1811.]

THE CONDUCT OF THE UNBELIEVING

UNDER THE

WARNINGS OF THE GOSPEL.*

And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons-in-law which married his daughters, and said, Up, get ye out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons-in-law.—*Gen.* xix. 14.

In the thirteenth chapter of Genesis, we are informed that Abraham and his nephew Lot were obliged to separate from each other in consequence of their great wealth, and of the contentious disposition of their servants. "Abram (says the sacred historian) dwelt in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelt in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent towards Sodom. But the men of Sodom were wicked, and sinners before the Lord exceedingly." Being corrupted by the fruitfulness and luxuries of the land, they abandoned themselves to idleness, to pleasure, and to crimes. Till, at length, having completed the measure of their iniquities, the Lord resolved to destroy them, together with the neighbouring cities and surrounding country.

But as Lot had abstained from the gross corruptions

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* Preached at Newtown, Long Island, in 1811.

which prevailed in Sodom, God was pleased to show him special favour, and to shield him from the vengeance which he was about to inflict on this devoted city. For this purpose, two angels were commissioned to warn him of his danger and to urge his immediate removal. They accordingly, after being graciously received and hospitably entertained by Lot, and after having amply evinced their extraordinary powers by rescuing him from the fury of his fellow-citizens whom they punished with blindness, delivered to him their alarming message. "And the men (that is, the angels,) said unto Lot, hast thou here any besides? son-in-law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring them out of this place. For we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the Lord, and the Lord hath sent us to destroy it."

Then Lot, fully persuaded that what the angels had told him would infallibly come to pass, went to his sons-in-law, and said, "Up, get ye out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons-in-law."

Let us, brethren, for a moment, inquire, whence it was that the sons-in-law of Lot thus slighted this friendly and seasonable warning. There were many powerful considerations which ought to have determined them to a different conduct. The matter in question was of the utmost importance. The message was no less than that they should perish with the abominable city in which they lived. Their danger then was imminent. They had no time to lose. Lot assured them, that in

a few hours, God would destroy Sodom. And Lot's character was such as demanded their unqualified and cordial belief of his declarations. They were no strangers to his wisdom, his integrity, and his tender affection towards themselves. They knew that he never had deceived them; and they had no reason to suspect that he ever would. And since he importuned them, with all the earnestness of a devoted father, to flee from Sodom; and since he himself designed without delay to withdraw from it, they ought to have been satisfied that what he told them merited their most serious attention.

Besides, the thing was in itself, in the highest degree, probable. They had long been eye-witnesses of the criminal licentiousness of their fellow-citizens. They were themselves deeply infected with the vices which prevailed around them, and they could not be ignorant that excesses so enormous must provoke the vengeance of a just and holy God. But they were not left to draw this inference merely from the nature of the case, and from their own imperfect ideas of divine providence as exercised over sinful and accountable creatures: for the Almighty explicitly revealed it by the ministry of angels, and the angels confirmed their mission by miracles. In fine however, if there had remained any doubt in their minds on this subject, they ought, at least, consistently with common prudence, to have retired from Sodom with their father-in-law, till the season of threatened ruin was over. They might have returned afterwards, if the city were not destroyed. Nothing of moment could have been hazarded by a day's absence. But none of these

considerations moved them. And Lot seemed as one that mocked unto his sons-in-law. They loved the world more than they loved God. They could not resolve to depart from Sodom and leave all their beloved idols behind. They flattered themselves that the danger was merely imaginary: or, at any rate, that there would be time enough to avoid it when nearer at hand, or when more apparent.

Lot therefore had the painful mortification of leaving them in Sodom. "And when the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters which are here, lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city. And while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters: the Lord being merciful unto them, and they brought him forth and set him without the city." "The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar. Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah, brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven. And he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground." Then it was that the infatuated sons-in-law of Lot were well convinced that he had given them wise and wholesome counsel. But the time of profiting by it was gone forever! They beheld swift destruction coming upon them like a whirlwind, and ere they could take thought for their safety, they were buried in the ruins of that city in which they had so obstinately persisted in remaining.

Brethren, in this brief, but affecting piece, we have a striking representation of the conduct of mankind generally under the light of the gospel: and of the manner in which they may expect to be treated at last by the Almighty and Omniscient Judge of quick and dead. This resemblance will appear more fully, by attending to the following observations.

1. This world, like Sodom, is in a state of sin and rebellion. It is under God's curse, and exposed to his wrath. But men, wicked as they are, and wretched as they must be, like the sons-in-law of Lot, do not believe this.

That man is a fallen creature, an enemy to God and to holiness, is asserted throughout the sacred volume in the strongest and most unequivocal terms. And the history of nations must present to a candid mind invincible evidence in support of the fact. Did not this fact exist, the whole system of revelation would have been useless; and salvation by grace could have no meaning and no application. But notwithstanding the abundant testimony of Scripture, of reason, of experience, of observation—and, I may add, of our own senses—yet multitudes do openly deny this truth: and the mass of mankind do virtually and practically reject it, be their professions to the contrary what they may. Hence much has been written, and much is daily said about the dignity of human nature and the perfection of human reason; and that too, by men of no mean talents and acquirements.

That there is evil in the world of some sort, all will grant. Though we think it would greatly puzzle the

advocates of human excellence to account for the existence of evil, in any form or degree, upon their own favourite hypothesis. That other men do wrong, we all of us complain. Nay we are scarcely willing to admit that any do right, in all things and at all times. We are sensible to a thousand injuries; our eyes are open to a thousand faults in those around us. We can readily enough descry their errors. And we feel no hesitation in exposing and condemning them. From what we continually hear men remarking of their neighbours, we might naturally infer, that they cordially believed the declaration of Scripture, that "the heart of the sons of men is full of evil." (Eccles. ix. 3.) "That all have gone out of the way; that there is none good, no not one. That the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." (Gen. viii. 21.) And that at his best state he is altogether vanity. (Ps. xxxix. 5.) But, bad as we perceive the world about us to be—uncharitable as we are toward our fellow-men—censorious as are our strictures on their failings—vindictive as we feel when we imagine ourselves in the least insulted, or slighted, or injured—yet we are ever ready to justify ourselves. We are blind to our own faults. We always have an excuse at hand for every impropriety. We are fruitful in palliatives for our worst deeds. This disposition to favour self, and to censure others, we believe, is, in a greater or less degree, universal. It is natural to man while unrenewed and but partially sanctified by the divine Spirit. And it is no slight evidence that this nature is exceedingly depraved.

Again, it is no uncommon thing for seemingly devout men to acknowledge, in general terms, that this is a very wicked world, that they are great sinners, and that they deserve no mercy. They will accuse themselves, especially in their prayers and confessions, of being the vilest transgressors of the divine law in thought, word, and deed. And yet should these self-abasing pharisees be charged, in the most charitable manner, with the slightest fault or irregularity, they would probably resent it. They are willing to be esteemed guilty of all sin in general, but of none in particular. So true is it, that few know the plague and the deceitfulness of their own hearts. Few know the extent and purity of God's righteous law. All men are prone by nature, to roll sin as a sweet morsel under their tongues. Sin constantly presents to their senses the most seductive allurements; and they do not believe her to be so odious, so deceitful, so dangerous a monster as the Bible represents her. They are pleased with her service, ensnared by her arts, deluded by her specious pretences; and they unwittingly suffer themselves to be bound fast by her golden chains. She leads them on blindfold, and utterly unconscious whither they are going. She inflames their minds with the desire and the prospect of pleasures, and honours, and delights without end. But she effectually bewilders the understanding, intoxicates the heart, and excludes the light of truth.

It is in vain we warn them to beware. It is in vain we reprove them for their folly and wickedness. It is in vain we point out their danger, and entreat them to

avoid it. It is in vain we threaten them, in the name of the Lord, with the speedy outpourings of his wrath upon their guilty heads. They hear us as though we mocked. Like the sons-in-law of Lot, they keep a steady eye upon the pleasures of Sodom, and they fear no evil; or if they do, they flatter themselves, that there is time enough to provide for the worst, when the worst comes. They tell us they have no idea of anticipating the evil day. They do not believe that human nature is so depraved or perverse as we pronounce it. They have a much better opinion of mankind, more charity for their species, than to suppose them so vile and guilty as to merit God's everlasting displeasure. They cannot believe that God is so hard a master as to notice the little frailties—as they are pleased to style them—the unavoidable imperfections of his creatures. They profess to entertain much more exalted ideas of his character. They imagine he rather *pities* than designs to *punish* their infirmities. They believe his mercy and goodness unbounded; and in these they presume to confide.

Such remarks may be heard from almost every description of men, whenever the subject of human depravity is introduced. How unconcernedly men can discourse on these awful truths, how ingeniously they can repel the charge of guilt, acquit themselves of blame, satisfy their consciences, and laugh at reproof and admonition, is as well known to the hearer as it can be to the speaker. They view the faithful minister of Christ, who ventures to say what God says, "that there is no peace to the wicked," as an officious disturber

of their repose. They would thank him to keep his unseasonable lectures at home, and to brood over his own miseries in the closet, without attempting to diffuse his melancholy and his fears among others. But does he prophesy evil, think you, without a cause? Is there no danger? Do you feel perfectly secure? Does conscious virtue support your hearts? Are you indeed basking in the sunshine of your Maker's favour, and do you fear no reverse? Do you flatter yourselves that all will be well at last? Why, let me ask, is not all well with you *now?* Why are you not perfectly happy in this life? If God be just, not to say merciful, and you innocent, why are you continually exposed to accident, to pain, to disease, and to death itself? Why do the proud worldling and the self-illuminated infidel, in spite of all their boasted reliance on the equity and goodness of their beneficent Creator, in spite of all their wretched hopes of annihilation, encounter so many seasons of awful misgiving and of fearful foreboding? Why do they *ever* feel the sting of conscience? Why do they *always* betray their weakness, and the utter vanity of their pretensions, in those moments when they most need consolation and support? Why do they not die, as they profess to live, animated with a good hope, either that the world to come is a world of blessedness for them, or that there is no such world at all?

It is worthy of remark, that in every age, the best of men, whether Jews, or Pagans, or Christians, or Mohammedans, have maintained that we are in a fallen, sinful, ruined state. While, on the other hand, the worst of

men have as uniformly opposed this opinion. Those men whom all, with one consent, denominate wicked, abandoned, unprincipled members of society, are the very men who are most prone to exculpate themselves, and to justify their conduct as necessarily resulting from the constitution of their nature. These are the men who plead for the privilege of acting agreeably to their inclinations. Who affirm, that to act thus, was the design of their gracious Creator: and that in acting thus, virtue consists. And that it would be unrighteous in God to punish them for gratifying desires and propensities which, they say, he himself originally implanted. These men, like the inhabitants of Sodom, are resolved to take their course, regardless of consequences, and deaf to remonstrances. They hear the heralds of the cross, who bring glad tidings of great joy, as if they mocked.

But, brethren, it is of no avail to fashion excuses, or to devise ways of concealing danger, or of banishing from the mind disagreeable truths. This world, after all that can be said in its behalf, is a world of crime, of misery, of desolation. It is a world in ruins. It has lost its beauty and its glory. We are wretched sinners. Conscience, Scripture, reason, everything within and around us, attest the fact. Our iniquities loudly call for vengeance. Sentence of condemnation has been pronounced against us. We are literally standing on the brink of perdition; and liable at any moment, and in danger every moment, of sinking into the deep, dark, fathomless abyss below, where is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth forever and ever.

But here, in the midst of deserved wrath, the Lord hath remembered mercy. Although our whole guilty world, like Sodom, deserves, and will soon experience, the full weight of his anger, yet as he offered deliverance to the sons-in-law of Lot, on account of their father's piety, so now does he freely offer salvation to us through the merits of Jesus Christ, his Son, our Mediator. This leads to the second head of resemblance, which we proceed briefly to illustrate.

2. The gospel of Jesus Christ is a message of grace and salvation to perishing sinners. But they disregard it, as the sons-in-law of Lot did his message. Through this gospel, life and immortality have been brought to light. It unfolds to man the sublimest and most precious truths. Truths, which reason had struggled in vain to compass. It provides a remedy for all his evils, temporal, spiritual and eternal. It tells him how to walk through this vale of tears with a cheerful countenance and a gladsome heart. Tells him how to encounter the difficulties of life and the terrors of death, fearless of defeat, rejoicing in hope, confident of a glorious triumph, and anticipating joy everlasting in the presence of a reconciled God and Father. This is the blessedness for which man was made. This it is which restores true dignity to his nature and real peace to his conscience. This it is which gives him his forfeited place among the sons of God. This it is which breaks in sunder the bands of Satan, unmasks the arch deceiver, exposes his snares, and defeats his purposes. This it is which arms the soul against all the delusive charms of sin and the

world. This it is which rescues wretched man from the horrid pit and the miry clay. This it is which lifts his eyes above the dust and transports his heart to heaven. This is the way, and the only way, to the smallest share of real happiness on earth. It is the only way ever yet devised which presents the slightest prospect of happiness beyond the grave.

Blessed gospel! and who can refuse to hail thee as the richest, holiest, most precious gift of God to his intelligent but rebellious creatures? As the sole fountain of purity and peace in life—our only solace and refuge in death?

Jesus has conquered sin, and death, and hell. And all the benefits of this glorious conquest are freely offered to us, who are the slaves of sin and the heirs of death and hell. Jesus has purchased heaven and a crown of unfading glory for his people. And now this heaven and this crown of glory are graciously tendered, without money and without price, to all who will believe in his name. Such, in few words, are the blessings of the gospel which is preached unto you, my hearers. And every sermon or exhortation founded on the gospel, is a direct call from heaven to dying men to flee the wrath to come and to be reconciled to God, their King and their Judge.

Now, it were natural to suppose that there could be but one question agitated on this subject, to deter any a single moment from cheerfully and most heartily embracing the gospel. And that this question would be: Is the gospel true? Can it be that such great, such

amazing, such inestimable favours are promised to guilty sinners through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ?

This would be a reasonable inquiry. And were not man a most unreasonable, perverse being, he would most fervently wish to find the gospel true. With this wish in his heart, he would commence his inquiry into its evidences. His doubts would arise rather from a fear that it is not true, than from any desire to prove it so. He would listen to the gospel as men listen to a piece of extraordinary good news, which they are ready to imagine too good to be true. He would be filled with painful anxieties and apprehensions, lest it should in the end disappoint his hopes when more minutely investigated. The infinite value of the object however, and the dread of being deluded, would stimulate him to a diligent and thorough scrutiny into its nature and credibility. His whole soul would be alive, and all his powers engaged, till every difficulty should be removed, by the discovery, either, that the gospel has no claims to our regard, or that it is worthy of all acceptation. This, I say, would be his natural course of procedure, were he not a blind and hardened sinner, insensible to his own best interests, and hostile to virtue and holiness wherever they appear in their native majesty and beauty.

Else, whence is it that men are prejudiced against the gospel previously, I had almost said, to any knowledge of its principles; certainly prior to anything like a candid examination of its evidences? What does the gospel purport to be, that men should disrelish it, oppose it, hate it, as it were, at first sight? Is there anything

odious, or frightful in its aspect? Does it come as an enemy to conquer—as a tyrant to oppress? No, brethren, she comes, if I may be allowed the figure, an angel of mercy, in all the winning mildness, in all the attractive tenderness of love: she comes weeping with sympathy for your miseries, holding in her hand the balm of consolation, and pleading for your confidence, not by a vain boast of untried skill, but by an actual exhibition of the ten thousand trophies, already won, of her power to heal and to save. She finds you in a state of sin and misery—she does not place you there—and she kindly offers to deliver you. This is her avowed object. Surely that man must possess a heart harder than the nether millstone and a conscience seared as with an hot iron, who can rise up and wantonly condemn and despise such unparalleled goodness; and that too, before he condescends to inquire into the validity of her pretensions. Especially as no other resource remains for him. He must either live by this gospel or perish without hope. In rejecting the gospel therefore, he commits a crime infinitely more heinous and awful than suicide: if indeed such a crime could be estimated independently of its connexion with his future destiny. For, agreeably to the premises assumed, he murders his own immortal spirit. He dooms his soul to an eternal death!

These remarks are applicable, first, to those who are too sluggish and too abandoned to notice the gospel, except to ridicule and denounce it whenever proposed to them; and that without regard to its contents. They are like the inhabitants of Sodom, whom neither mercies

nor menaces could disturb, or invite to hear even an angel's warning. They are applicable, secondly, to those avowed systematic infidels, who boast of coolness and candour and liberality in their researches; but who nevertheless set out with minds prejudiced against the truth and bitterly opposed to it. And who are determined, at all hazards, to prove it false, or at least to persuade themselves that it is so: or, what is still worse, to enjoy a malignant triumph in making converts to their own comfortless and ruinous opinions. They are like the sons-in-law of Lot, who, notwithstanding the *full* meridian blaze of evidence which shone upon them, could listen to the entreaties of the good man, their father, as if one mocked unto them.

But, be it remembered, the gospel dreads not the scrutinizing eye of its adversaries, be they never so artful, learned, or malicious; or with whatever weapons they may choose to assail it. It does not address itself to the credulity of mankind. Nor merely to their hopes and fears and wishes. It stands on a basis solid as the throne of the Almighty. And it challenges the world to approach, examine, and judge of its strength for themselves.

Brethren, have you any doubts—do you cherish any secret doubts—about the truth of the gospel? We venture to tell you, that your doubts arise from your fears that it is true. Because, being lovers of this world more than lovers of God; having no relish for the good which the gospel proffers, and dreading only the evil which it threatens; you think it your interest to find it an impos-

ture. This is the grand spring of all opposition to the laws, the word, the ways and the dealings of God.

But the evidences of the divinity of the gospel are so numerous, so cogent, so overwhelming, that the devils believe and tremble. These evidences I shall not attempt to exhibit. If there be, however, serious difficulties or doubts in the minds of any of my hearers, I invite them to a patient, honest and faithful investigation of the subject at their leisure. This is your interest, your duty and your privilege, as intelligent accountable creatures. I shall only observe in passing, that everything which human ingenuity and learning, everything which the subtlety and malice of the most licentious wits have hitherto devised in the shape of an argument against the gospel, has been, again and again, most amply refuted. The objector has been met on his own ground, and fairly driven from every position which he has ventured to assume. So that the professed unbeliever, at least of our age and country, is altogether without excuse in the sight of God and of honest men.

But, brethren, it is probable you may have already concluded in your own minds, that these remarks do not apply to yourselves. Perhaps they do not literally in their whole force and extent. You profess to believe the gospel or to admit its divine origin and authority. You have been accustomed to reverence sacred truths and sacred ordinances. Still, however, you may be as criminal as were the sons-in-law of Lot, and as practically unbelieving. That easy, civil, external respect so commonly manifested towards religion among decen

people is not enough to constitute you believers in heart and in truth. The mass of mankind under the light of the gospel, with the advantages of a religious education, in the habit of regularly attending church, in *name* Christians, do evince both by their sentiments and their actions, that they have never fully believed the testimony of God concerning his dear Son, and have not given up their hearts to him as their only portion and Saviour.

Are they, for instance, commanded to lead a holy life? Are the distinguishing practical precepts of the gospel inculcated; as the love of God, the love of our neighbour, the forgiveness of enemies, humility, self-denial, mortification to the world, doing to others in all things as we would have them do unto us, regulating our thoughts as well as our words and deeds according to the standard of divine truth? They think, and many avow it, that these precepts are too severe for human weakness to endure; and that it is by no means necessary to be conformed to them. Now did they really believe that God spake in earnest in his word, they could never entertain such an opinion.

Are they told that their own righteousness cannot avail to their justification — that their best deeds are good for nothing in the eye of a law which requires perfect obedience—that they can never recommend themselves to God's favour by any course of discipline or regularity which they can pursue — that they must be indebted wholly to Jesus Christ for pardon, sanctification and eternal life, as well as for grace to enable them

to discharge any duty to divine acceptance? Their hearts revolt against terms so humiliating. Else, whence is it that we so frequently hear them say, they intend to reform; they hope to be better, by and by; they mean to become more worthy of God's notice, more fit for his service, more weaned from worldly cares and occupations? Is it not evident that such men are acting on the principle that they can work out a righteousness of their own? And if so, is it not equally evident that they utterly mistake the spirit and object of the gospel? When, therefore, we charge them to come out from the world immediately; to flee to Jesus Christ guilty and polluted as they are, carrying no money, no price, no goodness of their own; to embrace him as all their strength and all their righteousness; to offer no other plea than their own poverty and vileness, and the all-sufficiency of his atonement—when we tell them that while they linger here, so far from growing better, or more deserving of the divine favour by any efforts of their own, they are continually adding to their guilt, increasing their distance from God, treasuring up wrath against a day of wrath, and preparing for themselves a more terrible condemnation: They hear us as if we mocked!

The sons-in-law of Lot remained in Sodom, because they did not believe that what had been told them of its destiny was true. But the men of whom we are speaking, acknowledge the truth and importance of our holy religion, and yet adhere with their whole hearts to the world. They are more culpable therefore and more

inconsistent than were the sons-in-law of Lot. They do not treat religion as a matter of serious moment: and when the minister of Jesus unfolds its blessings, and enforces its duties and its penalties, he seems as one that mocks unto them.

Were a sinner fully convinced that the condition of those who die at enmity with God is desperate and wretched beyond the power of remedy; and did he fear that at death he might be found among the number; could he remain careless and tranquil in this perilous state? Could he defer the work of his soul's salvation another day or another moment? The single fact of delaying repentance, proves that men currently listen to what is preached to them on this subject, as if one mocked.

If men were seriously concerned about the things which belong to their everlasting peace, they would enter the house of public worship with very different views and feelings from those which they most generally manifest on these solemn occasions. Much may be inferred from this fact in support of my argument. And in commenting on it, I may be permitted to appeal directly to the candid judgment of my hearers. Why do men frequent the temple of God on the Sabbath or at other seasons? What motive brings them hither? Is it love to God, or a desire to please him? Is it fear, or is it fashion? Do they come to learn something which they did not know before; or to be animated and stimulated to the more zealous and faithful discharge of duties already known? Do they come

honestly to worship God, to abase themselves at the footstool of sovereign mercy, to unite in the prayer of faith and the song of praise, to learn the way to heaven and the will of their Father who is in heaven? To hear truths explained awful as death and judgment, alluring as the joys of Paradise, terrible as the pains of the second death, sublime as the infinite glories and the eternal duration of the Almighty? Do they come really hungering and thirsting for the bread and the waters of life; to feast their souls on the love of Christ, that, with renewed vigour and hope, they may contend for the prize and the victory promised to the saints in the gospel? Do they rejoice when invited to assemble in the courts of the Lord, and esteem a day spent there in his presence and in his service better than a thousand wasted in the tents of wickedness? But I need interrogate no further. It is evident, from the slightest observation of the Christian world, that men generally give no more practical heed to the gospel which is preached to them from day to day and year to year, than the sons-in-law of Lot did to his message.

The citizens of Sodom, no doubt, had some forms of religion and worship. They probably had their idols and temples; their priests and soothsayers to whom they looked for counsel and direction in every emergency, and on whose assurances of peace and safety they implicitly relied. We know, too, that there ever have been and still are, within the pale of the visible church, lying prophets and hypocritical preachers—wolves in sheep's clothing—who flatter while they seem to reprove, who

darken counsel by words without knowledge while they pretend to instruct, who are blind leaders of the blind, who seek to make men pleased and satisfied with themselves, who preach smooth things, saying peace, peace, when there is no peace; who, instead of "preaching Christ and him crucified with all simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God," preach themselves, and wrest the truths of revelation to their own and to their hearers' perdition. And we know also, that men frequently prefer these unworthy time-servers to the faithful ministers of Christ. So it was in almost every period of the Old Testament history; so it was in the days of our Saviour and his apostles; so it has been often since; and so it is, in many parts of the Christian world, now. As the sons-in-law of Lot, with the rest of the inhabitants of Sodom, chose to listen to their own mercenary idolatrous priests rather than to heed the faithful monitions of the man of God; so multitudes now, actuated by the same spirit, deceived by the same description of false teachers, would hear an angel from heaven, or a Lot, enlightened by the Spirit of truth and animated with love to perishing souls, as if he mocked!

The grand obstacle to belief, or to religion's duly influencing the minds and lives of men, is their excessive attachment to this world. The sons-in-law of Lot loved to dwell in Sodom; they loved the pleasures and the society of Sodom: and therefore they would not be persuaded that it was on the eve of destruction, and that they would be destroyed with it.

3. But, in the third place, as the sons-in-law of Lot, when addressed by him, were in danger of suddenly perishing; so impenitent sinners now, who are warned in the gospel and by ministers of God, are in the most imminent and constant danger of a similar fate, on account of the divine displeasure which they have provoked, and the condemnatory sentence of that righteous law which has gone forth against all the ungodly.

The Scriptures declare that "God is angry with the wicked every day." That they are rapidly treasuring up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath. (Rom. ii. 5.) That they live in a world which, like Sodom, is filled with fraud and violence, and defiled with all manner of abominations. That their breath is in their nostrils. That their days are few and evil. That their life is a vapour which appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away. And men are constrained, sometimes at least, to fear that all this is true. They feel that their destinies are not in their own hands. They half mistrust that they are labouring for that which satisfieth not. They see how all earthly glory fades away. They suspect some lurking foe, even in the midst of pleasure and prosperity. They behold the judgments of the Lord continually abroad in the earth—"the terror by night and the arrow that flieth by day, the pestilence that walketh in darkness, and the destruction that wasteth at noon-day." (Ps. xci. 5.) Alas, my friends, who is safe? When were careless hardened sinners ever safe? Ah, what folly, then, to presume on the brittle thread of life on which hang everlasting things!

Sinners know not what a day may bring forth, and yet, at death, they are liable to a destruction infinitely more dreadful than that of Sodom.

4. Hence, lastly, we observe, that all impenitent unbelievers will perish, like Lot's sons-in-law, by their own folly. In spite of light and knowledge, mercies and judgments, warning and reproof, threatenings and entreaties, they will perish, soul and body, with an everlasting destruction.

Is this true, my hearers? Can it be proved, beyond all peradventure, that such will be the inevitable and unalterable doom of every impenitent sinner? I am aware that many attempt, from reason and philosophy and the benevolent character of the Deity, to show that this will not be his lot. But without entering at present upon the merits of the argument, suffice it to say, that however plausible and grateful to human nature it may appear, yet it does not amount to a demonstration; it does not even reach to a strong probability; it affords no solid ground of hope or confidence: nay, when candidly examined, it leads to the opposite result. The light of nature alone presents stronger evidence in favour of the eternity of future punishment than it does in behalf of a temporary duration. And to this opinion, some of the wisest and best of the heathen moralists, after the most painful research, were compelled to assent, as the most rational, philosophical and just.

I am aware also that many professed believers in revelation pretend to find in the Bible satisfactory evidence that all mankind will eventually be saved. That however long and severely some may be punished—and they

admit that the wicked will be punished in proportion to their crimes—yet, that they will, at some future period, be restored to the divine favour and participate the joys of the heavenly paradise. In reference to their system, I remark, that had it been (as it doubtless was) the express purpose of the Deity to reveal to men the doctrine of the eternity of future torments, we cannot conceive in what clearer or stronger terms it could have been stated, than those actually employed in Scripture. The very same words and phrases which are used in describing the duration of future happiness, are used in describing the duration of future misery. If the latter be not eternal, then neither is the former. At least, we have no more evidence of the one than of the other. Were it true that no soul will be punished forever, then it could not with truth be said of any man, as it was emphatically said of Judas: "Good were it for that man if he had never been born." (Mark, xiv. 21.) For if he were to suffer a million of ages, and a million times that number, still there would remain for him a complete eternity of perfect felicity. No sufferings can be conceived so great as to bear any proportion to an eternity of absolute happiness.

If it be objected again, that no human guilt can possibly deserve eternal misery; or that no finite accountable agent can become so criminal in this life or in any assignable space of time, as to be justly obnoxious to a punishment unlimited or infinite in duration: it may be asked, can any degree or amount of human virtue ever deserve eternal felicity or be entitled to unlimited and everlasting rewards? What do we know upon either

point, except that which revelation teaches? Does reason assure even to the best men—supposing them to be perfectly sinless—future and endless felicity beyond the grave? Does reason hold out even the remotest prospect or probability of such a result? Or, if it be assumed that the benefits of Christ's obedience and atonement will ultimately—no matter when—be extended to all men without exception: we demand the proof of this position. In a matter so unspeakably momentous, nothing should be taken for granted. No groundless or gratuitous encouragement should be desired; much less should it be eagerly sought for or heedlessly embraced. When or how shall men, after death, believe, repent, reform, and become holy? Can they be saved in their sins, and while possessing the very mind or spirit which is denounced as "enmity against God"? Can they be happy while unholy? Does not the Bible proclaim, that as the tree falleth so shall it lie? That those who die unsanctified, unjust, polluted with sin, will carry with them into the world of wretchedness and retribution the same nature, disposition and moral attributes? and that they will constantly grow worse and not better? That they will render themselves more and more deserving of the divine displeasure? and that their punishment will be only commensurate with their demerits? That they will be miserable just as long as they continue sinful, and not a moment longer? Is there injustice in such an arrangement? Every impenitent sinner on earth may be certified that he will be punished only while he continues to be an impenitent sinner. Should he be an impenitent sinner—that is, a wilful, disobedient opposer

of the divine character and government throughout eternity: is it not right and equitable that he should endure the penalty of such disobedience throughout eternity?

Let no man therefore indulge the flattering, but delusive hope, that an end of suffering will ever arrive to him in the place of future wo.

The misery of the lost sinner will be eternal. I shall attempt no description of this misery, nor assign to it any locality. The Bible itself gives us only a very faint and imperfect view of this awful subject. No language would be adequate to the representation. The most significant and terrific figures and images are occasionally resorted to by the sacred penmen to impart a feeble glimmering of the bottomless pit, and of the smoke of that torment which ascendeth forever and ever. But clouds and darkness rest upon this dire abode of torture and despair. No finite imagination can reach its horrors. Perfect misery forever, without the hope of a moment's interruption or alleviation, will be awarded speedily to every individual in this assembly who refuses to obey the warning voice and to comply with the gracious terms of the gospel of peace.

"Likewise also (says the Saviour) as it was in the days of Lot, they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded. But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed." (Luke, xvii. 28.)

ON HUMAN DEPRAVITY AND ITS REMEDY.

[NEW YORK, 1812.]

HUMAN DEPRAVITY AND ITS REMEDY.

Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.—*Romans*, viii. 7.

Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil."—*Jeremiah*, xiii. 23.

PART I.

God teaches us in his word, that man is a depraved, rebellious creature. That he is destitute of every holy principle, desire and affection. That he never does, and never will of himself seek an honest conformity to the divine commandments. That a radical change must be wrought in his corrupted nature; or that he will remain forever at enmity with his Creator, and exposed to his righteous displeasure. And finally, that he is utterly incompetent to produce this change in himself. That almighty power alone can dispose and enable him to render a voluntary obedience to that holy law which he has violated. Or, in other words, that man is sinful, helpless and wretched, and that the grace of God alone can restore him to that holiness which he has lost, and to that favour which he has forfeited.

* Preached first in New York, 1812.

These are the momentous truths to which your serious and candid attention is at this time invited.

I. In the first place: we shall endeavour to establish, or rather to illustrate the doctrine of human depravity—showing that it is a total depravity; utterly disqualifying us for the performance of any duty to divine acceptance.

II. Hence, secondly, deduce the necessity of such a change as is commonly denominated regeneration. On this doctrine, however, we shall not enlarge. But proceed:

III. In the last place, to show that the Spirit of God alone is adequate to the production of this thorough change in the heart of a sinner. Or that He only can enable us to do good, who are accustomed to do evil. This we hope to accomplish in such a manner, as to magnify the grace of God, and to leave the sinner without excuse for his enmity against the greatest and best of beings, and against the holiest and most perfect of laws.

I. Man is wholly depraved. His affections are alienated from God: and he has not the least desire or inclination to seek him.

We should think it unnecessary to suggest a single argument to prove a truth so evident to the reason and common sense of mankind, did we not know that multitudes, calling themselves Christians, do boldly deny it; and that others professing to admit it, do nevertheless so modify it, and so refine it away, as virtually to reject

its humiliating implication, and to destroy its genuine meaning.

It is a truth, however, which must be unequivocally embraced in all its extent, or the whole system of grace and redemption through the atoning blood of the Saviour will lose its glory and its value in our estimation. It is a truth to which we cannot too frequently advert. It is profitable to contemplate the ruins of our fallen nature: to survey the miseries which man has brought upon himself, and the wonders which God has wrought for his deliverance.

Let us then, with becoming humility, and with hearts open to conviction, impartially examine the evidences on which this doctrine or rather fact is supposed to rest.

We assert, with the prophet, that from the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it. And that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually.

This may be fairly inferred, we think:

1st. From the scriptural account of the apostasy of our first parents. From which it most clearly appears, that by yielding to the power of sin in the first instance, they entirely lost that moral rectitude and holiness, or that moral image of God in which they had been created. An inclination to sin took complete and absolute possession of their hearts. If then we admit the Mosaic account of the fall of man in its plain and literal sense, it will necessarily follow that all his descendants must partake of the same nature and constitution with their common father. There is no plausible way of avoiding

this conclusion. It were idle to object, as many do, that Adam did not represent his posterity in the covenant of works, even could this be proved. Because whatever Adam was, such, by the laws of nature, must have been his immediate offspring. If he became mortal and sinful, his children could not fail to inherit the same evils. If his appetites and passions were disordered and depraved; the same disorders would appear in them, and prove the inevitable temptations to sin.

Adam, after his transgression, no longer possessed the same nature which he had while innocent. It is therefore absurd to suppose that he could have been the parent of children as pure and holy as he himself was previously to his fall. Or, in other words, that he could have transmitted to his posterity a nature as essentially different from his own, as holiness is essentially different from sin.

The friend of Job, Eliphaz, understood the force of this argument when he exclaimed: "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" "What is man, that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?"

It is vain to remonstrate against the supposed injustice of this appointment. The fact exists, and proves beyond controversy, that such is the appointment. And shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin: and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." (Rom. v. 12.)

2d. The sacred volume asserts the total depravity of mankind in the most emphatic language. It is either

directly taught or fairly implied in every page of it. This truth, in fact, lies at the very foundation of the whole system of revelation and of redemption.

I beg leave to direct your attention only to a very few of the multitude of texts in which it is most clearly and forcibly inculcated. Texts, to which it would be difficult to assign any meaning, if we reject the doctrine in question. "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth:" was the declaration of the Almighty, immediately after he had destroyed by a flood the whole human race on account of their sins, with the single exception of Noah and his family. And it was in reference to this small and highly favoured family that the declaration was made. (Gen. viii. 21.)

"The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, (says the Psalmist, when describing the natural man,) to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." (Ps. xiv. 2, 3.)

"There is not (says Solomon) a just man upon earth, that doeth good and sinneth not." "Yea also, the heart of the sons of men is full of evil." (Eccles. vii. 20; ix. 3.)

Sinners are represented as spiritually deaf, and blind, and dead. They are called the unrighteous, the ungodly, the unholy, the unbelieving, the enemies of God and of the cross of Christ. They must therefore be utterly destitute of virtuous and holy affections. And the scriptural mode of distinguishing saints from sinners, affords invincible proof, that all who have not experienced the

renovating influences of the Holy Spirit, are totally depraved. That all who are not on the Lord's side, are enlisted with their whole mind and strength against him.

The Apostle Paul says: "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing." (Rom. vii. 18.) By which he doubtless meant, that in him, so far as he remained unsanctified, or in his natural state, there existed no principles of real goodness—no inclination to that love of God and his neighbour on which hang all the law and the prophets. Not a single living root or branch of genuine holiness. "The carnal mind is enmity against God." It is deadly hostile to his being, his perfections, and his government. "The heart (says the prophet,) is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jer. xvii. 9.) Now a wicked or corrupt heart necessarily corrupts all the actions which proceed from it. And since the impenitent or unrenewed always act from a corrupt heart, it follows that all their actions must be corrupt. This is agreeable to reason and to the whole strain of Scripture. Our Saviour too, frequently urged the same truth on his hearers. "For out of the heart (says he) proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: these are the things which defile a man." (Matt. xv. 19, 20.) The heart therefore must be the seat or fountain of moral corruption. In affirming this, however, we do not mean to deny "the universal depravation both of soul and body, in all the faculties of the one, and members of the other."* We maintain

* Fisher's Catechism.

agreeably to Scripture, and in the language of our Confession of Faith, that men are by nature "dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body."

Here it may be proper to remark, that when we say, men are totally depraved, we do not mean to affirm that they are as bad as they can be; nor that all men are equally wicked. But only, that the whole bent of their nature is to evil. That they will, if left to themselves, pursue the broad, crooked, downward road of vice; instead of the narrow, straight, up-hill path of virtue and holiness. And, for further proof, we appeal:

3. In the third place to facts: which present a mass of evidence in confirmation of human depravity which no ingenuity can honestly invalidate or evade.

And in entering upon this vast field of misery and ruin, allow me to ask of those who disbelieve or doubt the doctrine which we are endeavouring to establish: whence it is, that children as soon as they begin to act, seem evidently inclined to act amiss? If their natures are pure, how will you account for their early propensity to evil? Why are parents, and guardians, and teachers, ever compelled to correct, to reprove, to chide, or even to counsel them? Will you tell us, as many do, that they are corrupted by a wicked world after their birth? But how came wickedness into the world at all? If men are born with a disposition to that which is good and right; or if they have no stronger natural bias to sin than they have to holiness; that is, if they can as easily be directed to virtue and kept in the path of

duty, as they can be seduced to vicious courses: whence is it that there never occurs a solitary exception on the side of virtue? Whence is it that children, from the very first dawn of reason, and previously to the influence of example or of solicitation, manifest that they are wise to do evil, but that to do good, they have no knowledge and no inclination? Unless therefore, we admit the fact, that children come into the world with hearts full of evil, or fully disposed to evil, we could never account for the fact of their going astray as soon as they become capable of moral action. And therefore, to be consistent, we ought not to believe this fact, although we have the evidence of our reason and senses in its favour.

Again: if man be not a rebel against his Sovereign, then tell us why we meet so many evils, so many disappointments, so many vexations in life? Is there any middle or neutral ground between absolute rebellion and obedience; and do we stand on this? The supposition is absurd.

If therefore we are not at perfect enmity with that good and beneficent Being who created us, and who governs the world in wisdom and equity: why is the globe which we inhabit, subject to so many disorders—to such dreadful plagues and scourges? Why do so many poisons lie concealed in the animal, vegetable and mineral world ready to destroy us? Why do war, and famine, and disease prevail in every corner of the habitable earth? Why are we disturbed by so many unforeseen accidents which baffle all our schemes, and mar our

fairest prospects of felicity? Why does death reign the king of terrors over the human race?

Let the opposers of the doctrine of human depravity answer these and a thousand other similar questions which might be put, if they can. They are bound to answer them, or to remain forever silent about the native virtues of the human heart.

I might direct your attention to the history of nations—tell you to contemplate the actual state of mankind in any and every age—and bid you point out that spot of earth, or that point of time in which a nation, a family, or an individual has existed, free from the pollution and the miseries of sin. But the attempt would be vain. None such ever have existed. From the fall of Adam to the present day, our earth has been filled with crime and suffering. No golden age of purity and peace can be traced except in the fables of the poet and the enthusiast, whose imaginations wandering back to the garden of Eden, have delighted in painting scenes of past, though forfeited blessedness, rather than in describing what they themselves beheld and were forced to believe.

The history of our world, as you all know, is little else than a record of crime and violence—of ambition, wretchedness and desolation.

The history of God's peculiar chosen people, as delineated in the Bible by the honest pencil of inspiration, presents but a sorry picture of human nature, even when favoured with the greatest light and advantages. And

yet, if ever man might have been expected to exhibit superior or superlative worth of character—if ever the latent principles of goodness could have been elicited and brought fairly into action—if ever mere external privileges or motives, or culture and discipline could have operated to the moulding and fashioning of the human heart and conduct into the most perfect model of excellence: surely, it was among the descendants of faithful Abraham that we might have looked for such results. It was in the land of Judea, if anywhere upon this earth, that something like angelic purity and innocence might have been presumed to exist.

The heathen bear ample testimony to their own moral degradation, without excepting their most admired and self-denying sages and philosophers. But in Israel was the knowledge of the one living and true God—there were the temple, the altar, the priest, the law and the prophets—there were miracles and signs and wonders—temporal rewards and temporal punishments—everything to allure to duty, and everything to deter from vice—but man continued the same stubborn, froward, untractable, perverse, ungovernable, rebellious creature, that we find him now, in regions of much less, and in regions of much greater light. No severer comment on the character of man need be desired than that which the Jewish annals furnish from beginning to end. In fact, we can scarcely read their history without being amazed and shocked at their folly, presumption, stupidity and madness. We almost forget that we belong to the same species. And we certainly do forget that we

are acting the same ungrateful, infatuated, and inconsistent part.

The history of the Christian Church too, is not calculated to give us a more pleasing or elevating view of the subject. Should any man expect to find in ecclesiastical history as it is commonly written and specifically denominated, an account only or chiefly of characters and transactions bearing the stamp and exhibiting the features and properties of the religion of Christ, he would be grievously disappointed. He would meet with little else than a most loathsome, odious, disgustful disclosure of hypocrisy, intrigue, avarice, ambition, malice, revenge, bigotry and persecution. It would be a happy chance, indeed, should he, within the compass of a volume, light on one bright example of consistent virtue and unaffected piety—and that too, not of natural growth, for this he could nowhere find—but of the transforming power of heavenly grace upon the heart and life. Not, but that in every age, there have been many such precious instances of the sanctifying influence of religion; but only that these do not usually occupy a prominent place in the pages of the Church's most learned, ingenious and popular historians. And hence, so far as their history reaches, it sufficiently harmonizes with those civil and profane histories which are wholly and professedly devoted to the celebration of great national events—of great worldly men—and consequently of great crimes and follies.

Even the history of the little, obscure, humble, despised, but sincere and faithful flock of the good Shep-

herd—so far as any history condescends to notice it—and so far as we know anything about it, either in past ages or at the present day, and that too, in its purest best state—gives no manner of encouragement or countenance to the system of those who oppugn the doctrine of the deep, radical, and entire corruption of our nature.

All history therefore, sacred and secular, goes to establish the fact of human depravity.

The history of the Jews, and the history of the Christian Church plainly demonstrate that men, when placed in the most eligible circumstances, and with the most powerful incentives to virtue, cannot be induced to become virtuous. And it was to present this truth fully and distinctly to your view, that I have adverted to these histories. They show us that man is naturally so averse from holiness, and so prone to vice, that comparatively very few are inclined to the one, and restrained from the other, by any considerations which can be addressed to his reason, his conscience, or his interest. I say very few—I might have said none. For the *few* are but partially and imperfectly swayed and actuated by a sense of duty: and they continually betray symptoms, sufficiently strong and unequivocal, of their liability to sin and error. And even the few thus distinguished are, after all, as we shall presently see, indebted to a more powerful influence than could have been exercised by any external advantages which they happened to possess over others.

The argument then from history accumulates both force and pertinence, by embracing so wide a range, and

thus giving to man the fairest, fullest, opportunity of rising to all the moral dignity of which he may be supposed capable; even by the aid of the best education, and of the purest precepts and institutions of religion—and yet completely failing of success!

In Christendom then, as well as in Jewry, what do we behold? Where can we fix our eyes on the calm, steady, uninterrupted growth of virtue from infancy to manhood? Where has been—where is the human being on the face of the earth free from the taint of sin; or who has even so far gained the victory over it as to be acknowledged by the world without a blemish? Now, a few such instances, at least, might reasonably be expected; were we to grant that there are some stamina or principles or sparks of genuine moral goodness inherent in the human breast—some small, no matter how small a foundation on which to erect a superstructure—some root or seed, no matter how slender or feeble, which might possibly be so tenderly and carefully cultivated and cherished, as that it would under some fortunate circumstances, in some happy clime, attain to maturity and fruitfulness. We have a right to expect this. But the experiment has been making for six thousand years: and to what purpose, I leave the candid inquirer to determine.

Why men can presume on their own innocence, in spite of the ten thousand proofs of vice and wretchedness which everywhere stare them in the face, is difficult to conceive. How any can venture that they do not deserve the displeasure of God, when they are every

moment experiencing and witnessing that displeasure in some form or other, is altogether inexplicable, except on the principle that they are so depraved as to choose rather to charge God with unrighteousness than to admit their own guilt and criminality.

Brethren: shall I prosecute this inquiry one step further? Suffer me then to appeal to your own experience, to your understanding, and to your conscience. Did you ever seriously believe or imagine that you were living in obedience to the divine commands, and consistently with the end of your creation? Do you, for example, delight in the holy service of God? Do you love his glorious character, his perfections, his law, his word? Do you, in all things, seek to honour his name and to perform his will? Does no inferior motive influence your conduct? Do all earthly pursuits and cares and pleasures give place to the angelic employments of praise and thanksgiving to your Heavenly Father? Do you habitually respect the law and will of God in your daily walk and conversation—in all your thoughts, desires, purposes and actions? Which of you, my hearers, will deliberately affirm these things of himself? All men would do it joyfully and fervently were their hearts right with God. But conscious guilt puts even human vanity to the blush: and very few of us would dare to make the arrogant assertion. For, "verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity." "Corruption is his father, the worm is his mother and his sister. And he is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward." (Ps. xxxix. 5; Job, v. 7.)

Now, if there were no sin, there would be no misery in the world. And the fact that misery everywhere prevails, proves that sin must be at least equally prevalent. Sin exposes all who are infected with it to the righteous vengeance of the infinite Jehovah, who cannot in justice suffer a single infraction of his holy law to escape unpunished. But grant, what is certainly true, that the demands of this law have been satisfied in the person of Christ, so that God can be just while he freely pardons the believing penitent offender: yet so long as you remain under the dominion of sin, you must be wretched. And you would be so, were you admitted, with your present evil natures and dispositions, into the mansions of the blessed. And for this very obvious and sufficient reason—because God and all the happy spirits in heaven are holy. Without holiness, heaven, as well as hell, would be a place of torment. Holiness and happiness are indissolubly united. And so are sin and misery. To seek holiness, is to seek happiness. To desire to be holy and yet to be willing to be miserable, involves a contradiction, and is therefore absurd.

How then are you to become holy? How is sin, the grand enemy of your peace, to be subdued? Do you imagine yourselves capable, at any time, of repenting and of reforming your lives? Does not past experience convince you that all such dependence is vain? Have you not learned enough of the plague of your own hearts to know that all your boasted strength is perfect weakness—that all your resolutions to amend are broken as soon as made? Have you not good reason to appre-

hend that all future attempts of the same kind will prove equally fruitless? "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil."

Our Saviour understood this matter better. He well knew that a corrupt tree can never produce good fruit. He saw that man, whom he came to save, was disobedient to the divine will in his prevailing and habitual temper and inclination. And that it was vain to enjoin on him moral precepts, without previously imparting to him a relish for spiritual and divine things. Now, under these circumstances, what could have been done for him? What remedy or expedient could have been devised or proposed? Verily, says the Son of God, he must be born again—born of the Spirit. And he assigns the reason: "For that which is born of the flesh is flesh."

Hence plainly appears the absolute necessity of regeneration or the new birth. Not as a condition of eternal life; but as an indispensable preparative to holiness here, and as qualifying us for glory hereafter.

This was the second point which we proposed to establish. On this, however, we did not intend to enlarge at present. And the rather, because we have treated of regeneration on a former occasion, and have made it the subject indeed of several discourses at different periods.

PART II.

III. We proceed in the third and last place, to inquire how, and by whom, this great and radical change is to be effected?

It is evident from the nature of the case, and from the clearest scriptural testimony, that man of himself is utterly incompetent to regenerate his corrupted nature. This is the special work of the Holy Spirit. He claims it as his prerogative: and we rejoice in ascribing it solely to him. For the truth of this position, we appeal to the infallible word of inspiration. Believers are represented by St. John, as born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. (John, i. 13.) "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." (Tit. iii. 5.) "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ. For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." (Ephes. ii. 4.)

And thus saith the Lord by the mouth of Ezekiel:

"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them." (Ezek. xxxvi. 26.) "No man (said the Saviour) can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man, therefore, that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." (John, vi. 44.)

These and many similar passages of Scripture prove that the whole work of regeneration, sanctification, and salvation, is the work and the free gift of the divine Spirit, through the atonement and mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ. But to prevent all sloth, indifference, and discouragement on our part, we are exhorted in language equally strong and explicit, to give all diligence to make our calling and election sure. And these two apparently opposite and contradictory extremes are brought together and enforced in a single sentence of the apostle. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." (Phil. ii. 12.) For although that grand moral revolution, usually designated by the term regeneration, be wrought by the almighty power of God, yet He always operates on the minds of rational creatures according to their natures. Whatever difficulty or mystery may exist on this subject, must be resolved into

the infinite wisdom and absolute sovereignty of the Eternal, whose counsels we can never hope to fathom.

There is no unrighteousness with God: and though his ways are past finding out, though he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and though he maketh the proudest and most obstinate sinner willing in the day of his power, yet we know that he will be just when he speaketh and clear when he judgeth. And we know, moreover, that it is impious to represent HIM as the immediate author of sin: or as being, in any way or in any degree, accessory to the criminality of his creatures. "Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God, for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man." (James, i. 13.) "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live." (Ezek. xxxiii. 11.)

Man is sometimes represented in Scripture, and with peculiar significance and propriety, under the similitude of ground; and the means of grace as seed which is sown. But a divine agency is declared to be necessary to cause the seed to vegetate and to bear fruit. For though Paul plant and Apollos water, yet God only giveth the increase. (1 Cor. iii. 6.)

Is man then passive in this work? Has he no power of self-control and direction? Has he no will—no choice of his own? How can he be a moral agent and accountable for his conduct, if thus unable to obey the will of his Sovereign and his Judge? If God change the heart and implant the principles of love and holi-

ness, what remains for him to do, or how can he do anything? Such questions are frequently asked, not merely by the ingenious infidel or impious scoffer, who seeks to subject the sacred volume to ridicule, by exposing what he terms its absurdities; but we find the same cavilling disposition, in a greater or less degree, among all men who are strangers to the genuine spirit of the gospel. They all seem pleased that any kind of excuse can be fashioned for their continuance in sin. They scorn to be considered as debtors to grace for power to serve God. They either misinterpret the gospel system to suit their own views, or else denounce it altogether as degrading, inconsistent, and inapplicable to their state and circumstances. And yet it is not the design of the gospel to abridge their liberty in the least. It merely ascribes to God what it is utterly impossible for any finite being to effect; while it leaves to man the full unrestrained use of all his faculties. It calls in the aid of Deity in a case worthy of his interposition, and in which he alone can operate.

But it is curious to observe with what ease the sinner can change his ground; and urge, now one thing, and now its opposite, in the defence of his own cause, and for the justification of his wicked practice.

When we tell him of the importance of the new birth, he will deny its necessity—plead the dignity and excellence of human nature—the perfection of human reason—and the goodness of God, who, he says, does not require of his creatures anything which they have not light and strength sufficient to perform.

Should we again demand of these very men, why they do not, agreeably to their own sentiments, repent and forsake their sins? They frequently, without any concern or regard to consistency, reply, we cannot. The Bible—for now they are ready enough to appeal to the Bible—the Bible, say they sneeringly, tells us we can do nothing. That God must first give us the heart and the ability to serve him. And therefore we may as well take our ease and indulge ourselves. If God mean to save us, he will do it, let us conduct as we may. If he has decreed our destruction, we must submit. There is no alternative! Such is the natural language of the depraved heart. This is the way that sinners presume to charge their Maker with the folly and guilt of their own perverse and rebellious deeds. This is one of the many refuges of lies in which they seek comfort and security.

But, brethren, all such reasoning is founded on the grossest ignorance of our own true character and condition. It rests on the proud assumption, whether we perceive it or not, that man is placed here in a state of probation similar to that in which Adam was previously to his fall. And that we are to be approved or condemned hereafter on the ground of our own personal merit or demerit, without any reference to a Mediator. This is an error peculiarly flattering to carnal nature. It blinds the understanding and hardens the heart against the truth. Hence the bitter opposition which sinners make to the grace of the gospel. Admit the entire corruption of our nature; and every difficulty

vanishes. Reject this, and we urge in vain the mercy of God through a crucified Redeemer.

Now were revelation silent on the subject of human depravity, yet facts, as we before remarked, speak a language which none, in the exercise of sober reason, can at all times wholly resist. The hardiest freethinker that ever advocated the native excellence and perfectibility of man, has been constrained to tremble under the lashes of a guilty conscience; and to give the lie to his own declarations in those honest moments of solitude, of sickness, of approaching dissolution, when some faint glimmerings of the truth would force access to his soul, and cast contempt on all his golden dreams of future bliss, or banish from his breast the last sad, chilling, miserable hope, that death is an eternal sleep.

Yes, my friends, we must all, sooner or later, yield an unqualified assent to the humbling truth, that man is in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity. No matter how he came into this deplorable state. At least, that is no part of our present inquiry. He is in it. And how shall he escape from it? That is the question which now concerns us. It is worse than trifling for him to excuse himself by urging, that as he had no agency in his own creation, so he ought not to be blamed for possessing evil propensities, and for living agreeably to his nature; that is, according to his own perverse inclinations; and hence think it beneath him to accept an offered remedy. I imagine we should think very meanly of the understanding of that man, who, when thrown into the ocean and while struggling with the waves and

with death, should refuse all proffered aid, till he could first be perfectly satisfied of the justice and propriety of his being in such a strait. Such a person would, without hesitation, be pronounced a fool or a madman by all the world.

Now the sinner's case, upon his own principles, is parallel with this. He is exposed to perdition. We suppose him to admit this fact. We ask, who exposed him to perdition? The Bible answers, himself. But he says, no. Be it so. And allow him the full benefit of the concession. What does it profit him? He is still in the ocean, and just sinking to rise no more. What then does he gain by the plea, either that he did not leap into the flood himself, or that he was violently plunged into it by another? His danger is equally and awfully imminent, view it as you will. He is perishing, and he cannot save himself. But to drop the figure:

Man then is awfully depraved. He is never happy, often very wretched in this life; and certainly exposed to infinite and endless misery in the future world: and he is perfectly helpless. He has no resources, no redeeming principles or faculties within himself. Here I present you with the worst of his case; and it is bad enough truly. But bad as it is, it is not desperate. The sinner I have said, is helpless. What then can be done for him? Who will rescue him? Who *can* rescue him? Whose mighty arm can deliver, protect, guide, and uphold him, till he arrive in safety within those blessed mansions where perfect joy shall crown his lot forever? Surely, if he cannot help himself, let him ask assistance

of those who are able to help him. If he can find no deliverer on earth, let him look to heaven, and cry unto HIM who died that such as he might live. For Jesus, the sinner's friend, has promised aid to all who humbly ask it. He freely offers himself and his quickening Spirit to all who choose to come to him as needy perishing sinners.

Nothing can be plainer, or more reasonable, or more analogous to his proceedings in every other case. This is precisely the course he takes in all temporal difficulties. When destitute of the necessaries of life: is he not ready enough to ask alms? Nay, does he not, with a moving eloquence, describe his wants and his sufferings? Will he sit down and perish in the presence of one who is willing to relieve him the moment his proud spirit is sufficiently humbled to crave charity? Will he reason thus with himself? "I am hungry; yea, almost famished, it is true: and here is a rich man famed for humanity and benevolence. I am informed also, that I need not expect to share his bounty without soliciting it in humble terms. But I cannot see the necessity or the propriety of taking all this trouble. I am now in his presence. He perceives my distress: and if he really be as beneficent as he is reported to be, then he will doubtless relieve me as soon without entreaty as with." Now, I would fain ask, whether any man, in his sober senses, *could* act thus: and if he should, whether his conduct would not be the result of pride, and obstinacy, and unbelief, rather than of a well-founded confidence in the mercy and goodness of the rich man? And finally,

whether he would not deservedly perish for refusing to comply with the only condition required—and that one too, nothing more than the manifestation of a desire to be assisted?

Take another instance still more in point. A criminal is arraigned at the bar of justice, found guilty, condemned, and cast into prison to await the execution of the sentence justly pronounced against him. He is told, however, while groaning under a weight of irons in his dungeon, that a friend has satisfied for him the demands of the law, and appeased his judge, who is now ready to grant him a pardon whenever he will penitently petition for it. What, think you, he would do? Hug his chains, and say: "This cannot be. For if any man has been so kind as to intercede for me and to suffer for me, then my judge has no right to keep me here. And as I believe him to be an upright man, I am sure he will release me as soon without any solicitation on my part as with." No, brethren, the culprit would do no such thing. Even without any encouragement at all, he would cry for mercy. And the more incapable of helping himself, the more importunately would he beg the favour and clemency of him on whom his destiny depended. Such is the nature of man. When in danger, in want, in affliction, he almost instinctively and involuntarily calls out for assistance. Thus it was with the disciples of our Lord when overtaken by a storm at sea. They came to him and awoke him, saying, "Lord, save us: we perish!" (Matt. viii. 25.)

It is evident therefore that we do not believe ourselves

to be in a dangerous and ruined state. Here, we apprehend, is the root of the evil. We roll sin as a sweet morsel under our tongues; and we do not believe, that is, we do not feel in our hearts, so as to realize, that it worketh death and damnation. We have no just or adequate conceptions of the infinite glory and holiness of the omnipotent Jehovah, or of his righteous law which we have violated. Else our chief inquiry would be, how shall we escape the wrath to come?

Many men who are still strangers to a saving change of heart, would not hesitate to acknowledge with their lips, that the wages of sin is death. That sin will certainly doom them, if impenitent, to the torments of hell, and that they are utterly helpless in themselves. This they might avow in consequence of having received a correct religious education. Speculative knowledge however is one thing: real conviction is another and quite a different thing. For did they really believe all this, they could no more be at ease, than a felon would be when sentenced to the rack or the gibbet. And did they moreover believe that there is no help for them on earth or in heaven, they would be driven to despair.

They would have begun to endure the horrors and the agonies of the second death. Strange and inconsistent, therefore, is the part which they act in this matter. Their reasoning on the subject, under every form which plausible objection has assumed, is directly contrary to all the known principles of human conduct. And if we allow their arguments to be valid, it follows, that not

one act of their lives is such as could possibly result from a genuine belief of them.

Thus, brethren, we have maintained, agreeably to Scripture, that God only can renovate a depraved nature; or enable those to do good, who are accustomed to do evil. That this does, by no means, destroy the freedom of man in action. That it does not lessen his accountability, or afford any cloak for negligence and carnal security. That it does not preclude the use of means. That there is no foundation for the popular objections to this doctrine. That it is no less agreeable to sound reason than to Scripture. And that the real cause of men's opposition to it, is their gross insensibility to their own sinful and perilous condition as transgressors of God's righteous law, and subject to its curse.

Our discourse shall be continued with an IMPROVEMENT, consisting of two or three distinct particulars.

1. This subject teaches us the folly and the presumption of murmuring against the divine government as being arbitrary, unjust, or unnecessarily rigid.

Let no sinner imagine that God requires of him impossibilities. Let him recollect that he is not to be justified by his own works, nor delivered from the tyranny and condemnation of sin merely by his own unassisted exertions. It is the law which says, "do this, and live." "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." (Gal. iii. 10.) Now, had the glad tidings of salvation

through a crucified Redeemer never been published to our guilty world, we should have been obligated to yield perfect obedience to the moral law. And this obedience we could never have rendered, because, by sin we have lost the power of obeying. Still, however, we should have remained forever exposed to its penalty, without the most distant hope of a reprieve. And yet even then we could have had no just ground of complaint, except against ourselves, for having wilfully incurred the divine displeasure. The claims of the law are still valid against us if we reject the grace of the gospel. Under the law, we may well talk of impossibilities, and lament our utter inability to comply with its demands. But in the gospel, everything that pertains to eternal life, is the unmerited gift of God through Jesus Christ. The sceptre of grace is extended, and we are invited to touch and live. The gospel was never designed to teach us how to escape deserved wrath by any meritorious efforts of our own; but to destroy self-dependence in every shape, and to lead us to One greater than we, who is mighty to save, even to the uttermost, all who come to God through him.

When, therefore, we say, we cannot save ourselves, we say right. But when we say that we cannot use means, or that it is superfluous to employ them, we talk as absurdly as we should do, were we to affirm, that as we cannot preserve our lives, or insure to ourselves a single moment, so it is unnecessary to eat, or drink, or take any precaution whatever; for God will doubtless keep us during our appointed time without any concern on our

part as well as with. The reasoning is just as good in the one case as the other. And the man who can satisfy his mind with sophistry of this sort, ought, agreeably to his own principles, to sit carelessly down and trust to Providence for his daily bread, without making one effort to procure sustenance. He ought to neglect his fields, his workshop, his counting-house, or his study and his books: for God can, if he please, make them administer to his wants, or contribute to his improvement in knowledge, when he is idle as well as when he is industrious. But, no: man may neglect his soul, and leave it, as he says, to the mercy of God. But he takes special care of his temporal interests, and never thinks of confiding them in the same presumptuous and careless manner to Providence. He knows that if he does not plough and sow he can never reap. He knows that if he does not study diligently and perseveringly, he will never become learned, or rise to eminence in any profession.

Thus it is with regard to the means of grace, such as the revealed word of God, the preaching of the gospel, the dispensation of holy ordinances, the privileges of the Sabbath and the sanctuary, humble prayer and devout meditation; all of which God has appointed, and he has promised to bless the honest and diligent use of them. He has ordained them equally with the end to which they are designed to lead. And he does nothing in vain. "Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and ye shall find: knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh, receiveth: and he that seek-

eth, findeth: and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened." (Matt. vii. 7.) Such, brethren, has God declared to be his will, and he means not to deceive. God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

2. Hence, secondly, appears the radical deficiency of every system of virtue and religion which rejects the necessity of a divine agency in changing the heart. The best of them are utterly incapable of converting men from the love of sin to the love of genuine holiness.

Lectures on mere worldly morality may be heard and read with much avidity and pleasure; but their influence on life is partial and transient. They do not reach the root of the evils which they propose to eradicate. They impart to the soul no taste, no relish for truth and purity. Mere moral suasion never has proved effectual to the reformation of mankind, or of any portion of mankind: and from what we know of human nature, we may safely pronounce that it never will. Many reputed wise men of various characters and creeds, have long since pledged themselves to regenerate the world by the genial influence of rational principles—the rapid extension of which over the benighted and prejudiced nations of the earth, they have as confidently predicted. But the slightest attention to facts, to passing events, will sufficiently expose the utter vanity of their pretensions, and the cruel impiety of their exertions.

Beware then, brethren, of their corrupting, but plausible and imposing tenets. These tenets are artfully and industriously disseminated among us at the present day, both from the press and the pulpit. Their poison is in-

sinuated gradually and imperceptibly. They are extremely flattering to our nature, but they lead directly to deism, if not to atheism. It is time that every real friend of the gospel should be alive to the open and the secret machinations of its enemies, and be induced to contend earnestly, but prudently and prayerfully, for the faith once delivered to the saints.

3. Hence we learn, in the third place, that God can operate on the mind of man in such a manner as not to destroy, or, in any degree, to impair his liberty. Or, in other words, that divine agency and human liberty are perfectly consistent with each other.

Should any ask, how this can be? We answer, it is not our province to tell. Secret things belong unto the Lord our God. His ways are above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts. Who by searching can find out God? Who can know the Almighty unto perfection? His judgments are a great deep. Let us not presumptuously seek to fathom it. It surely is not wonderful that God's wisdom and power, his purposes and dealings, should transcend our finite comprehension. It would be wonderful indeed, were it otherwise. It is our wisdom to know our place, as feeble, short-sighted, dependent creatures. And not to covet knowledge which angels have not.

That God worketh all things after the counsel of his own will (Eph. i. 11,)—that God has decreed whatsoever cometh to pass—or, that God does certainly preordain, foreknow, arrange, contrive, determine the whole course of events—is a truth as evident from reason as

from revelation. This, no man, who acknowledges the existence of a Deity, can consistently deny. It results from the very perfection of his nature. But, on the other hand, we have the strongest possible evidence of our own freedom. We are conscious of it in every action of our lives. We feel that we are free. And the evidence of our own feelings and consciousness is irresistible. Not all the sophistry of all the philosophical or theological advocates of necessity or fatalism that have ever perplexed the human intellect with metaphysical refinements and speculations, can tear from the soul the fond conviction that we are free. Free to choose, and free to act.

No man is guilty of any gross immorality, whose conscience does not, if it be not seared as with an hot iron, accuse and reproach and condemn him. It tells him that he might, and that he ought to have acted otherwise. Now conscience would tell him no such thing, were he under any mechanical necessitating influence of doing as he did. He might then plead necessity as his excuse. And so might every villain in society, did any such necessity exist. But who ever heard a thief or an assassin defend himself in court by urging, that he was predestinated or fated to such an infamous course of life—and therefore ought not to be blamed? Or would he melioriate his case by declaring that such is the constitution of his mind that he could not resist his inclination to steal and to murder whenever an opportunity offered? Would any human judge listen for a moment to such an apology? Would he not regard it as a mani-

festation of a deeper and more reckless depravity than even his overt crimes had indicated?

You see, brethren, how absurd such reasoning appears when applied to any case in common life. And can you imagine that any plea of this sort will be more pertinent or availing before the omniscient Jehovah who will judge the world in righteousness, and render to all men according to the fruit of their doings? "Be not deceived. God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." (Gal. vi. 7, 8.) If any of you finally perish, it is your own free choice. "Ye will not come unto me that ye may have life," says the compassionate Saviour, whose arms of mercy are extended to embrace all who choose him for their portion.

The gracious invitation of the gospel is made to all men without exception or limitation. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." (Isa. xlv. 22.)

Surely, if a man persist in his unbelief and impenitence, after being plainly instructed, reasoned with, encouraged, warned, and threatened concerning his present danger and his future destiny; is it not most equitable that he should suffer what he thus disregards? Does not conscience witness that he deserves to be miserable? Can he expect to be spared, who does not spare himself; or to be saved, who neglects so great salvation? Can he reasonably hope for heaven whose own heart testifies that he made light of it when proposed to him? The

Judge will say to him presently: "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself. Thou didst regard neither warnings nor reproofs. Thou didst crucify afresh the Lord of glory and put him to an open shame. And now what remaineth for thee, 'but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.'" (Heb. x. 27.)

It is evident therefore that the inability under which sinners now lie, as a consequence of the fall, is not of such a nature as to take away the guilt of sin, the propriety of exhortations to duty, or the necessity of endeavours after recovery. With God's secret purpose we have nothing to do, because we know nothing about it. Let no man therefore perplex himself about the divine decrees. They can have no bearing on his conduct.

4. In reference to the origin and existence of sin in our world, which is admitted on all hands to be one of the most abstruse and profound subjects upon which human reason can be exercised, I observe, that it behooves the enemies, as much as it does the friends of revelation to account for it. The fact is indisputable and undisputed. Who can explain it, or trace its history? Is it a dark, fearful, overwhelming mystery? It is a mystery no less of natural than of revealed religion. But here I desist, with a single remark: The Bible exhibits the Deity as the author of all the good in the universe, and of nothing but good. All evil is from the creature. God created man perfectly holy. Man has made himself sinful. To attempt any explication of the cause or manner of this event, beyond the

Scriptural record, would but open the door to endless and fruitless speculation; and involve us in fathomless and inextricable difficulties. Whoever is eventually saved, will give God all the praise. Whoever is lost, will reproach himself while eternity endures.

5. In reference to the merit of good works, and to the ability of moral agents to perform them, I remark: That could a man obey the divine law in every tittle, he would do no more than his duty; and of course could deserve no favour or reward on that account, unless such favour or reward had been previously promised to his obedience. But, in any event, he would be indebted entirely to God for ability to serve him acceptably. All the angels and saints in heaven are constantly indebted to him for this ability, and will be indebted to him for it while they continue to exist. With what profound humility then ought we to contemplate our own character and condition, as dependent, ruined, wretched, redeemed sinners!

6. Lastly: The whole scope and object of this lengthened discussion has been to show, that we stand in perishing need of making immediate and earnest application to the Lord Jesus Christ, as our strength and our righteousness; as the only name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved. (Acts, iv. 12.)

Jesus is able and willing to save even to the uttermost. He is a Saviour from sin as well as from hell. He is such a Saviour as we need. Whosoever believeth in him, shall live with him and reign with him forever.

He is the only Saviour to whom we can look with hope. To him we may look with confidence. "Him that cometh to me, he says, I will in no wise cast out." "Awake, therefore, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." (Eph. v. 14.) "Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live: and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." (Isa. lv. 3.)

Let us all, dear brethren, seek to be reconciled to our God while we may. Let us look unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith: and in the words of the Psalmist, let each of us pray, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." (Ps. li. 10.) "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." (Mark, ix. 24.) "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe." (Ps. cxix. 117.) "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way." (Ps. cxix. 37.)

And may the grace of God that bringeth salvation, teach us all, "that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world: looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ: who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." (Tit. ii. 11.)

AMEN!

SELF-EXAMINATION.

[NEWTOWN, LONG ISLAND, 1811.]

SELF-EXAMINATION;

OR THE

PROPER PREPARATION FOR CELEBRATING THE LORD'S SUPPER.*

But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup.—1 *Corinthians*, xi. 28.

The irregularities and indecencies countenanced by the Corinthian Christians at the sacred table of the Lord, and which are so sharply reproved and condemned by the apostle in the context, are well known to all readers of the New Testament. The particular circumstances therefore which gave rise to the injunction contained in our text need no comment or illustration.

Our remarks, at this time, brethren, will be suggested by the occasion on which we have convened, rather than by the letter of the text.

We are about to commemorate the sufferings and death of the blessed Saviour, whose amazing love to sinners led him to forsake the bosom of the Father, to tabernacle in human flesh, and, in his own person, to endure the penalty, and to fulfil the demands of that righteous law which we had violated.

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* Preached at Newtown, Long Island, in 1811.

That the occasion is important, the privilege great and precious, the blessings procured and, in this ordinance, confirmed to the believer, infinite in value, none will deny. None, assuredly, who are penetrated with a lively conviction of the depravity of their natures, and of their consequent exposure to the divine wrath, had not the law been magnified and made honourable by the Son of God, who offered himself a living sacrifice to satisfy divine justice, and procured mercy and pardon and reconciliation for the guilty and the perishing.

The administration of the Lord's Supper has been often witnessed; and we are prone to be wearied by a frequent repetition or recurrence of the same thing, however excellent in itself, and however deeply we may be interested in it. We have received abundant instruction on every point which relates to the nature, the end, and the proper subjects of this holy ordinance. If we have duly regarded the lessons and counsels of the Bible and of our ministers, we cannot reasonably expect any additional light or information upon these topics. But inasmuch as the sacrament itself continues the same that it was in the days of our Lord and his apostles, as its benefits are the same in degree and in kind, and as we remain the same sinful dust and ashes, exposed to the same errors and temptations, and needing a constant supply of the same heavenly grace and strength, it follows that the same instructions, the same reproofs, the same exhortations, and the same encouragements must still be imparted.

Let us then, for a few moments, withdraw our thoughts from the world, and humbly and devoutly meditate on this solemn subject; and listen to the train of reflections which it shall suggest, however trite and obvious they may appear. And God grant that we may all attain to a frame of mind happily suited to a profitable and delightful participation in that feast of love to which our risen and exalted Saviour, we trust, will presently welcome us.

I. The Lord's Supper is an ordinance instituted by Christ immediately before his last sufferings: in which he has appointed bread and wine to be received as memorials of his death for the world, and as symbols of the union of his people to him and to one another. The Apostle Paul, in the chapter from which our text is taken, has given us the origin of the institution and the manner in which it was celebrated by our Lord himself, as an example for the imitation of his church in all ages. With this corresponds the account of the evangelists, Matthew, Mark and Luke. Whence it is evident that the broken bread was used as an image or representation of the body of the Saviour that was broken in the room of the offender. And the wine poured out was designed to be the emblem of his blood that was shed for the remission of sins.

These simple but lively symbols were appointed to call up to the memory of a believer, with more vivacity and force than can be done by the mere preaching of the gospel, the extraordinary passion and atoning sacrifice of

his Redeemer. Do this, said the Saviour, while he broke the bread and offered the cup, in remembrance of me.

Another, and a secondary object of this ordinance, is to represent the union of believers with their spiritual Head and with one another. "The cup of blessing (saith the apostle) which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, being many, are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread." (1 Cor. x. 16, 17.)

The Lord's Supper may also be considered as the seal which the believer annexes to the covenant of grace, to declare and authenticate his acquiescence in its conditions. "It is a sacrament (says the Shorter Catechism of our church) wherein, by giving and receiving bread and wine, according to Christ's appointment, his death is showed forth, and the worthy receivers are, not after a corporal and carnal manner, but by faith made partakers of his body and blood, with all his benefits, to their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace."

The institution therefore of this holy ordinance evinces the wisdom and goodness of Christ, as it is designed to be a continual exhibition of a crucified Saviour, to excite the faith and love of Christians, incline them to renew their covenant with him, and to dedicate themselves to his service and honour.

II. But, brethren, this Supper of our Lord is not to be approached in a thoughtless, irreverent manner. "But

let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup."

Self-examination is here enjoined on all Christians as a special duty, previous to their approaching the table of their Lord. It is, indeed, an indispensable duty at all times and under all circumstances. For the whole life of the real believer is a season of vigilance and prayer, and of ceaseless warfare with the flesh, the world and the devil. It is therefore a strange and inconsistent notion which many people entertain of the gospel and of its requirements, when they suppose that religion consists in being grave and serious and circumspect and devout on extraordinary occasions only. Now there are multitudes of such professors in the world. They reserve all their religion for particular seasons. They manifest none of it in their ordinary walk and conversation. They are perhaps extremely conscientious in regard to certain public duties and external observances, and especially in preparing their hearts, as they term it, for a worthy participation of the sacred festival which we are about to celebrate. They are sometimes so strict indeed as to set apart a certain period previous to communion day, for fasting, prayer, reading the Scriptures, meditation and confession. And yet, as soon as they withdraw from the table, they mingle again with the world; and flatter themselves that their conduct has merited not only absolution for the past, but indulgence also for future carelessness and indifference. They feel that they have been submitting to an irksome, painful task—to a species of penance

which, in their view, must amply atone for all their faults, or rather foibles, during the intervals, and insure them favour and safety at the last. These are, not unfrequently, your confident, self-assured, boasting Christians; who talk much more of their own self-denial and of their own good deeds, than of their Saviour's righteousness and sufferings.

We would not be misunderstood on this point. We mean not to say, or in any degree to insinuate, that there is an impropriety in solemnly devoting a portion of time for religious exercises previously to our venturing to partake of the symbols of the broken body and shed blood of the Lamb which was slain for the remission of sins. The contrary of this we do most unequivocally maintain and inculcate. We merely observe that this is not enough. That the religion which influences men in this way; which leads them to extraordinary acts on particular occasions only, while it has no visible effect on them in the main tenor of their lives, is not the religion of Christ.

This holy religion prescribes one steady, straightforward, unvarying course to all its professors. It regulates the heart and the actions. It grants no license for any remissness in duty, nor for any carnal gratification. It commands us to love the Lord our God supremely, and our neighbour as ourselves. To take up our cross daily, and to follow Christ through evil and through good report. That whether we eat or drink or whatever we do, to do all to the glory of God. We are required to "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ: Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." (Tit. ii. 10.) And the "wisdom" or the religion "that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy." (Jas. iii. 17.)

"It is therefore altogether inconsistent with the character of Christianity to act a subservient or an accommodating part. Her nature, her office, and her object are all decidedly adverse to that base alliance into which men have attempted to degrade her. Pure and spotless as her native skies, she delights in holiness; because God, from whose bosom she came, is holy. Possessed of power, and designed for dominion, she claims the heart as her throne, and all the affections as the ministers of her will. Nor does she consider her object accomplished until she has cast down every lofty imagination, extinguished every rebellious lust, and brought into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."*

Now our business, brethren, is to examine, whether or not we have embraced this pure, this benevolent religion in all its fulness and extent. And whether

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* The Fashionable World Displayed, by John Owen.

we are heartily determined, in the strength of the Lord, to conform our lives to its heavenly precepts. If, after candid inquiry, we find the evidences in our favour, then we have a right to this sacred feast of love. Our blessed Saviour will meet us at his table and welcome us to his supper. We shall hold sweet communion with him and with one another. It will be a season of refreshing to our souls, of encouragement to our hearts, under all the painful vicissitudes of life. We shall make a good and profitable day's journey towards the heavenly Canaan.

Let us then retire from the world, and review our hearts and our lives. Let us honestly consider our motives, our views, our wishes, and the objects which most powerfully engage our affections. Let us see whether we can come to this holy service, in order to cherish and keep up the memory of Christ. Whether we are moved to do so, by a grateful sense of Christ's love in dying for men. And whether we come with a firm purpose of doing honour to Christ, by living in all respects agreeably to his precepts and example.

If you deal faithfully with yourselves, there is no danger of any error or self-deception. The rules which are given in Scripture for your guidance and instruction, are clear and unequivocal. There is not so close a resemblance between the children of light and the children of darkness as some have imagined. Their characters are totally distinct. And they may be easily known. At least, they may with certainty know themselves. There is no just ground therefore for

that uncertainty which many entertain or affect to entertain about their situation.

Do you love God, brethren; or do you love this present world? You cannot serve both God and Mammon. Do you hate sin because God hates it? Or do you roll it as a sweet morsel under your tongues; and only dread that awful punishment which the Almighty will inflict on the impenitent? You may be terrified with the prospect of an approaching judgment and of eternal sufferings, while you feel no godly sorrow for your sins. You may tremble while you behold the rod of justice suspended over your guilty heads, and the flames of divine wrath ready to devour you, and yet have no humbling, contrite views of yourselves as transgressors of the holy law of God—no disposition cordially to embrace the Saviour as he is freely offered in the gospel, and as your only refuge from sin and despair. "Whosoever is born of God, (says the apostle,) doth not commit sin: for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, (that is, wilfully and habitually,) because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother." (1 John, iii. 9.)

Among professors there is a variety of characters, which, though they do not much resemble each other, yet do all agree in this, that they are equally remote from the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. Of these we shall briefly notice three classes.

1. The first consists of those who regard external

conduct only. Who think it of no consequence what a man believes, provided his practice be right. These therefore do not concern themselves at all about doctrines, or exercises of heart, or systems of faith; but confide wholly in a regular, upright, honourable course of life. They are, it may be, humane, and liberal, and honest, and just, and merciful: and they cannot imagine that anything more is necessary. They profess to do as they would be done by. And if they do the best they can, they think that God will never bring them to judgment for such frailties as are merely incident to imperfect human nature. They presume to trust in their own vague and confused notions of the divine mercy and goodness. As if justice were not an attribute of the Deity whom Christians serve. They may wear the garb of religion, but they certainly know nothing of its power and efficacy upon the heart and conscience.

2. The second class seem anxious only to be orthodox in their principles—sound in the faith—that is, well versed in the peculiarities of the creed maintained by that particular sect to which they happen to belong. Their religion is a mere work of the head. Its influence is altogether selfish. Such men are generally illiberal and contracted in their notions. They are bigoted, censorious and opinionated. They are morose, grovelling in their desires and pursuits, and frequently uncivil in their deportment. They are ever watching with hypercritical eyes and ears that they may discover some flaw in the religious sentiments of their neighbours.

They are eager to sound the trumpet of alarm—to raise the *hue and cry* of error and heresy against such as may differ in any point from themselves. They delight in subjects of controversy and speculation, pride themselves on their adroitness and ingenuity in defending their own tenets: and oftentimes have the vanity to suppose that they are contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.

In their hands, religion is a system of dark, subtle, unintelligible dogmas and questions, which, instead of enlarging the heart and subduing its corruptions, do, on the contrary, most effectually harden the heart and render it incapable of any generous, charitable, pious, or praiseworthy emotions or aspirations.

They are wise in their own conceits — puffed up with vain ideas of their own superior worth and consequence. They are as a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. They darken counsel by words without knowledge. They have a form of godliness, and though they may not explicitly deny the power thereof, yet their actions prove that they do not feel its benign and heavenly influence.

3. The third class includes those who make religion a matter of feeling, or a work of the heart only. These are all ardour, and zeal, and animation. They talk much of their religious experience — their devotional frames of mind—their raptures—their assurance of salvation—their extraordinary and ravishing views of the divine character and glory—the consoling and illuminating influences of the Holy Spirit on their hearts and

minds: and they oftentimes work themselves up to a feverish pitch of enthusiasm that leads them to imagine they feel a joy unspeakable and full of glory. But, brethren, that it is only the animal affections and passions which are thus excited, and which are mistaken for spiritual operations, is evident from the fact that their lives do not, by any means, correspond with their exercises and professions. They do not carry their religion abroad with them into the world. It does not characterize their dealings and their intercourse with mankind. Their faith is a dead faith; because it produces no fruit. Their love cannot be genuine, because the Saviour hath declared, "if ye love me, ye will keep my commandments." The zeal which they manifest is not according to knowledge. They may have a name to live, but they are certainly dead in trespasses and in sins.

The religion of Jesus was never intended to be confined to the closet and the church, and therefore such men may boast as much as they please of inward joys; and of the whispers of the Spirit to their souls, that they are washed from their sins in the laver of regeneration or by the blood of sprinkling; yet if they do not bring forth the fruit of the Spirit, which is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, (Gal. v. 22,) they must still be ranked with unbelievers. For without holiness no man shall see the Lord.

It is greatly to be feared that not a few persons satisfy themselves with a religion something like this. Men

are so easily led astray by warmth of feeling—by the power of sympathy—by the noisy effusions of affected zeal—as frequently not to distinguish between the reality and this imposing counterfeit. Are there not many in the world—many within the narrow sphere of our own immediate observation—who, in the common concerns of life, leave religion quite out of view; and reserve it all (as we before intimated under a different head,) for retirement, for the Sabbath, or for the place of public worship? Nay, do we not all frequently forget the practical and benevolent nature of that holy religion which we profess? Are we not too often satisfied with mere lip service—with those animal fervours which we sometimes experience—without remembering that solemn declaration of our Saviour, which he made to his disciples and to all the world: "Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven?" (Matt. vii. 21.) "Pure religion, and undefiled, before God and the Father, is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." (Jas. i. 27.)

These several descriptions of men may all imagine themselves to be in the right. They may be sincere in their professions, and verily suppose that all is well with their souls. They are grossly culpable however in not examining more minutely into their own character, and into that of the gospel which they thus ignorantly pervert and most egregiously misrepresent.

We say nothing of the hypocrite. He knows that he

is in heart an enemy to God and to religion. He therefore is not himself deceived; but his study is to deceive others. Religion with him is only a cloak to conceal from the world his sinister designs. His conscience is seared as with an hot iron; and no human power can reach or affect it.

III. But, my friends, we trust that you all desire to deal honestly with your own souls; and neither to deceive nor be deceived. We fain would hope that none among you are so hardened as to dare to venture into the presence of the heart-searching and sin-avenging Jehovah, with a lie in your mouths. You feel that you are frail shortsighted creatures; and that you have need of divine grace to help you onward in the path of duty. You tremble at the thought of profaning that holy ordinance which is about to be administered in this place, by touching the consecrated elements with unhallowed hands—by approaching the Master's sacred board with cold impenitent hearts.

Take then a word of counsel and of caution from the little book which our church has adopted as the scriptural epitome of her faith, and which she recommends to her children as a convenient manual for their guidance and instruction. The passage which I am about to cite is, indeed, but a paraphrase of our text. Thus it reads: "It is required of them that would worthily partake of the Lord's Supper, that they examine themselves of their knowledge to discern the Lord's body, of their faith to feed upon him, of their repentance, love, and new obe-

dience, lest coming unworthily, they eat and drink judgment to themselves."

1. Have we knowledge then, brethren, to discern the Lord's body? Do we understand the great and leading doctrines of the gospel? And are we experimentally acquainted with their power and efficacy upon the heart and conscience? Do we entertain suitable views of the perfections of God and of his law—of the evil of sin, and our own miserable estate by nature and practice—of the extent and fulness of salvation through the atonement of Jesus Christ? Together with just apprehensions of the nature, design, and benefits of this holy ordinance?

2. Christ is often presented to us under the figure of bread; and it is necessary that we eat this bread of life; but we can do this only by faith. Hence it becomes us seriously to inquire whether we really possess this grace. Have we then fled for refuge and safety to Jesus Christ, and unfeignedly accepted him as the Lord our righteousness? Have we cordially embraced him in all his offices: and do we humbly and confidently rely on him only for eternal life? Can we look beyond the bread and the wine, to that body which was broken and to that blood which was shed on Calvary for the satisfaction of divine justice and for the pardon of our sins? Remember, the tree is known by its fruits.

3. We are directed to examine into the nature and evidences of our repentance; and let us do so in good earnest. Let us see, whether we can come to the Lord's table confessing our sins—mourning and sorrowing over them with that godly sorrow which worketh a repent-

ance that is unto life, that needeth not to be repented of—and resolving through divine grace to amend our lives, to be more circumspect in our walk and conversation, and to maintain a constant warfare with our corruptions.

Some men are satisfied with, what may be termed, a general repentance. They profess a kind of humiliation and sorrow from a sense of their sinfulness in general: and they often manifest very indefinite general desires after universal holiness. They confess, in the customary general phrases which education and habit may have rendered familiar, that they are miserable sinners and hell-deserving sinners; while they have no very enormous sins or even common failings in particular to acknowledge and to deplore. Neither do they feel the burden of sin upon their hearts or its sting in their conscience. Beware, brethren, of such a repentance. It is unto death! It will not avail you in the hour of trial.

4. Take heed also that you come to this heavenly feast, having your souls filled with love to God, with love to the Saviour whose unspeakable love you design to commemorate, with love to the brethren and to all mankind. Here, permit me to propound two or three brief, searching questions: and let each of us, before that God who cannot be deceived and who will not be mocked, candidly answer them in solemn silence, as best we may, to our own approving or condemning consciences. Do we love the Lord our God with the whole heart? Is the blessed Redeemer precious to us

as he is to them that truly believe? Do we love our neighbour as ourselves? Or do we, at least, foster no envy, jealousy, or malice against any of our fellow men? Do we freely forgive their trespasses against us: and can we sincerely pray for our enemies? Does charity—that charity, without which, though possessed of all other gifts and graces, we are nothing—does this heavenly charity pervade our bosoms, and reign over and regulate all our affections, purposes and actions?

5. Lastly. Do we choose the law of God for the rule of our life? Do we delight in it after the inward man? Are we constantly striving to conform our conduct to this holy standard? Do we entertain new views of the divine character and government? Have new principles been implanted within us? Have new motives begun to actuate our hearts and to influence our lives? For "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." (2 Cor. v. 17.)

Thus, brethren, we have given you a few general hints relative to the nature of that self-examination which is required of us previously to our celebration of the Lord's Supper. And it becomes us all with earnestness and with a holy jealousy to perform this important duty, lest coming unworthily we eat and drink judgment to ourselves.

Be exhorted then, fellow-Christians, to dismiss, for a season, the cares of this vain world from your minds. Disengage your thoughts and affections from earthly objects, while you prepare to commemorate the most

interesting, the most illustrious, and the most tremendous event that ever did, or ever can engage the meditations of mortals. The death and passion of our Redeemer! Who can conceive the unutterable love and condescension of the Son of God?

It was He—and need I remind you of this? Yes, I would remind my own soul of it too.—It was He, who, for our sakes, veiled his divinity in human flesh, and became a meek and patient instructor of the poor, the ignorant, the perverse and the perishing. It was He, and blessed be his name, who, for our redemption, submitted to the most cruel and ignominious treatment of his bitterest enemies, to the agonies of the cross, and to the stroke of the king of terrors. Who, for our exaltation, rose again with power and majesty and glory,—ascended to the heavenly mansions, purchased by his own precious blood for all his faithful followers,—where, sitting at the right hand of God the Father, he maketh continual intercession for us, and holdeth in his hands the reins of universal government.

Shall these things be forgotten, or can we regard them with indifference? Can our hearts be cold or lukewarm —can our imaginations wander abroad while we profess to be wholly absorbed in the sublimest theme that ever awakened an angel's praises?

Can we contemplate, without gratitude, the wisdom and goodness which led the beneficent Jesus to institute a rite that should recall his love to our memories, and animate each kindly sympathy and pious passion in our hearts? A rite, which, by the breaking of bread and the

pouring out of wine, should represent to us, in the most striking manner, that amazing proof of his boundless benevolence which he exhibited in submitting to scorn and revilings, to buffetings and contempt, to contumely and derision, to wounds and bruises, to all extremes of mockery and insult and cruelty, from the very sinners whom he came to ransom and to save; and, above all, to the hidings of his Father's face whom he had never offended?

And the more we reflect on this instance of divine love, the more clearly shall we perceive that there was a peculiar propriety in pointing out, by a particular ordinance, a fact so all-essential in the system of revelation. Especially, when we consider that the allurements of sensual pleasure, the charms of ambition, the splendour of riches, the blandishments of genius and learning and fame,—that temptations indeed from present objects of every kind—have too often a fatal influence on our temper and conduct, a melancholy aptitude to draw the soul aside to folly, and to obliterate all serious and spiritual impressions.

It was therefore a wise and gracious intention of our great Redeemer, by a frequent repetition of the sacramental feast, to call back the wandering heart of man to a sense of his duty and obligations as a Christian.

Besides, though the religion of the gospel be altogether gentle, peaceful, generous, charitable and beneficent—though its whole tendency be to correct and purify and enlarge the dispositions and moral capacities of men—and though it enforce its claims upon us

by the most cogent and affecting motives; yet such is our native blindness and depravity, that we but too readily open wide the doors of our hearts for the admittance of envy, jealousy, wrath, hatred and malice; and to these we too often yield the victory and the triumph without a struggle or a prayer. What pre-eminent goodness then in the Saviour, by thus uniting us together at the sacrament of his body and blood, to inspire us with condescension, forbearance, long-suffering, compassion, kindness and love; and to urge the putting away of all bitterness, anger, evil-speaking and revenge!

Go now, penitent believer, whoever thou art, and meditate on that infinite grace of the Eternal which contrived the glorious plan that proffers pardon, peace and endless felicity to a creature so undeserving as thou art. Think on these sublime and affecting subjects, till thy heart is overwhelmed with sorrow for thine iniquities—till thy faith becomes lively, active, and fruitful—till thy gratitude and love shall flow forth, unchecked and unalloyed by any impure admixture or worldly consideration, towards the Father and the Son—till thy obedience is rendered uniform, delightful, uncompromising and complete.

Go, brethren, and let every man seriously and impartially examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. And when we gather around the festive board, may the great Master be present and welcome us as worthy guests at his table, and own and bless us as his devoted faithful disciples!

But, are there not some among us who have been baptized into the faith of Christ and who have never publicly renounced the gospel, who pay no regard to the dying command of their Lord?—who appear to be ashamed of his cross by refusing to sit down at his table? Are there any such persons present—any who fear to avow their belief in Christianity and their respect for its institutions? Any who honour the world, and dread its scorn or its vain opinions, more than they honour the living God and dread his righteous displeasure—more than they regard his solemn commandments or his terrible threatenings?

Perhaps, my friends, you deceive yourselves in this matter. Your very presence here, at this moment, would seem to indicate that you do not mean to absent yourselves from the Lord's Supper through a wilful disregard and contempt of the institution itself: nor because you are less susceptible of tender emotions and virtuous aspirings than other men: nor because you can discern no beauty in holiness—nothing desirable in those things which the Scriptures pronounce to be pure and lovely and honest and of good report. But you are afraid to come, it may be. And excuse yourselves on the ground that you are unfit for so holy a service. You belong to the class of desponding, doubting, hesitating, trembling, self-condemned, half-believing, almost persuaded Christians—who wish to enjoy the privilege, but who do not yet see their way clear. Is this your case? Allow me affectionately to ask: when do you expect to be more fit or better prepared? Were you

not in the same predicament at the last communion season? Have you improved any since? Have you grown better by delay? Are you any better prepared now? In what does your unfitness consist? What is it that deters you from obeying a clear and positive command of the great Head of the Church? Can you hope to be saved while you continue to neglect a known and acknowledged duty? Or do you flatter yourselves that this is not a duty incumbent on you yet, because you have not made a public profession of religion? But why have you not made such a profession? Do you not believe the gospel? And do you not know that the evidence of faith is cheerful obedience to all the precepts of the gospel? Are you fit to die? Or do you think it more solemn, more awful to witness a good confession at the table of your Lord, than to appear before his judgment seat in heaven, to receive sentence according to the deeds done in the body? Do you think that they ought to be received into the society of the blessed above, who never communed with the saints on earth?

Many such questions might be put, to which you could return no satisfactory answer. You deceive yourselves in this concern. You are unconsciously going about to establish a righteousness of your own. And the more you labour in this vain pursuit, the further will you wander from the path of duty and of life. You are as fit at this moment as you can ever make yourselves by any efforts however painful or long continued. The Captain of salvation commands you to surrender at once and at discretion. He bids you come to him with

all your guilt upon your heads: and he will relieve you of its burden, of its pollution, and of its power. He will make you free indeed; and enable you to follow him in the regeneration steadily, joyfully, successfully. He will give you the victory over every foe, and cause you to triumph gloriously.

Those who are restrained from coming forward by their unhappy fears and scruples, we would encourage by the assurance, that such persons, as, after serious, diligent and thorough self-examination, and mature preparation agreeably to Scripture, still think themselves unworthy, are not the least acceptable guests at the table of our Lord.

In one sense, brethren, we are all unworthy. We are children of wrath even as others. We have no goodness to boast of, no merit to plead. We are poor, guilty, wretched, perishing sinners: and we are all equally so. But it was precisely for such that Christ died. For such he instituted this commemorative festival. Were we as immaculate as angels are, we could have no part nor lot in this matter. Holy beings need no Mediator—no Saviour—no atonement—no repentance. The viler we are, the more precious ought Christ to appear, and the greater are our obligations to him for his glorious work of redemption.

Do you then really feel a grateful sense of the love of Christ to mankind—of that love especially which he manifested in giving his life a ransom for the world? Have you such a value for the covenant established by his blood, that you are resolved to accept it with

gratitude, and to adhere to it with all your soul? Have you such a regard to holiness, such a hatred of sin, that you are determined to lead pious, prayerful, exemplary lives? If so, come freely to the table of the Lord, and show forth your love, and breathe out the desires of your hearts, and seal your vows at the foot of the cross. Jesus never breaks the bruised reed, nor quenches the smoking flax. Genuine unaffected humility will never prove an obstacle to the Holy Spirit's taking up his abode in the heart.

Come out from the world, therefore, and rejoice in the Lord; for he is your strength and your righteousness. Take consolation from his gracious promises. Lift up your weeping eyes with confidence to your Father in heaven. For like as a father pitieth his children, so doth the Lord pity them that fear him. He will own you as children. His Spirit will enable you to behold more clearly the all-sufficient fulness of the atonement of Jesus Christ. He will remove your doubts, strengthen your graces, enliven your affections, and fill your souls with joy unspeakable in believing. You shall taste and see that the Lord is good, and delight in all the ordinances of his appointment.

And now, my hearers: to those of you who have honestly embraced the gospel and witnessed a good confession before men—who can exclaim with the Psalmist, "whom have we in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that we desire besides thee"—who have renounced the world to follow Christ—and who can, from happy experience, attest that his yoke is easy and his

burden light—to you, may I not add, in the cheering language of the apostle, "rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I say rejoice"?

What though the world should frown upon you, and despise you, and evil entreat you, and persecute you; you have a compassionate and an Almighty Friend and Father in the heavens, who watcheth over you and careth for you. You have laid up treasures there of which no power on earth or in hell shall ever deprive you. There is a crown of rejoicing—there a throne of glory—there are mansions prepared for you from the foundation of the world: and behold, the narrow Jordan of death alone separates you from your promised inheritance.

Have you not often already, with an eye of faith, pierced the veil of mortality, traversed the streets of the New Jerusalem, surveyed the heavenly country where Jesus reigns, and almost realized the glories and the joys to be revealed? What was then your prayer and your purpose? Did you think it possible that the world should ever again engage your hearts, and engross your thoughts, and damp the ardour of your zeal, and tempt your feet astray? In those delicious moments of rapturous contemplation, and vivid faith, and holy joy, the wily tempter could gain no access to your bosoms: the fiery darts of the adversary fell harmless at your feet: for you were then well harnessed to the battle, and you beheld the Captain of your salvation near.

Arise then, Christians, if you have begun to faint, or to grow weary, or to retreat—if your eyes have become

so obscured by the fascinating splendours of an insidious, deceiving world, that you cannot clearly see the way to your Father's house—arise, and resume the gospel armour. Gird on the sword of the Spirit, and, in humble reliance on the God of armies, boldly put to flight all the enemies of your peace; that you may be prepared and heartily disposed again to approach that feast of good things—that inexhaustible fountain of love and consolation, which has so often gladdened your hearts and revived your drooping spirits in days that are past.

Examine yourselves afresh: seek your first love: repent of your backslidings: return to the Lord with a broken spirit, and pray that your faith fail not. And again sit down at the table of your Lord. And may you be enabled to rejoice that your Redeemer liveth, and reigneth King in heaven and over the earth; to rejoice that your iniquities are freely pardoned, and that the great salvation purchased by his blood is yours, and yours forever. "Be glad in the Lord and rejoice ye righteous, and shout aloud for joy all ye that are upright in heart."

In conclusion, brethren, suffer a word of exhortation from that apostle who thrice denied his Master, and who afterwards shed plenteously the bitter tears of repentance. His example is worthy of the imitation of all those who have been guilty of similar offences. His precepts and counsels cannot be unseasonable or inapplicable to any of us on the present occasion.

1 Peter, iii. 8. "Finally, be ye all of one mind, having

compassion one of another; love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous:

9. "Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.

10. "For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile:

11. "Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it.

12. "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.

13. "And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?

14. "But, and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled:

15. "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.

16. "Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evil-doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.

17. "For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well-doing, than for evil-doing."

2 Peter, i. 5. "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;

6. "And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;

7. "And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.

8. "For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

9. "But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.

10. "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:

11. "For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

AMEN!

ON SPIRITUAL MINDEDNESS.

[KNOWLTON, NEW JERSEY, 1814.]

SPIRITUAL MINDEDNESS.*

For to be carnally minded is death: but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

Or as it is sometimes rendered:

But the minding of the flesh is death, and the minding of the Spirit is life and peace.—*Romans*, viii. 6.

In further answer to the objection stated in the third chapter and last verse of this epistle, namely: "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law,"—the apostle in this chapter, with great feeling and energy, displays the many powerful motives which the doctrines of the gospel, explained in the preceding chapters, suggest for engaging both the understanding and the affections of believers to a continued pursuit of holiness.

One of these motives to holiness, and the one contained in our text, is, that according to the new covenant, all who live a wicked, sensual life, shall die eternally: but that all who live in a holy, spiritual manner, shall be rewarded with life eternal.

By the carnal mind, it is generally admitted, the apostle means the mind of the natural man — the

* Preached at Knowlton, N. J., in 1814.

mind which all men possess, until, as our Saviour himself expresses it, they are born again. The word *carnal*, it is true, signifies the same as *fleshly*. Carnal is opposed to spiritual, as flesh is opposed to Spirit. And, by the word *flesh*, when applied to man, we sometimes mean the body, in distinction from the soul. Whence, perhaps, some might be ready to think, that by the carnal mind, is most naturally to be understood a mind that is excessively and unusually under the dominion of bodily appetites;—constituting such a character as would be universally denominated *sensual;* and such as would be disapproved and condemned by the ordinary worldly standard of morals. But from the frequent use of these and similar expressions and phrases in Scripture, and especially in the chapter from which our text is taken, we may fairly conclude that nothing worse is here intended than the natural mind of every unrenewed and unsanctified sinner.

Our Saviour having observed to Nicodemus, that, "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God,"—to explain himself, and to give the reason of the necessity of this second birth, adds: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." (John, iii. 3, 6.) And in Galatians (v. 17) the opposition of the flesh to the Spirit is pointed out in the strongest terms. "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." And all sorts of sins are called works of the flesh; and are said

to proceed out of the heart. By the flesh in these and similar passages, must necessarily be understood, "the old man which is corrupt"; and by the Spirit, "the new man, which is created after God in righteousness and true holiness." In the same manner, the words flesh and spirit, carnal and spiritual, are evidently used in the context. The apostle had said, (verse 1,) "There is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." And (verses 5, 6,) "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death: but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." He then adds (verse 7): "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." (Verses 8, 9,) "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." The apostle is manifestly describing the essential difference in temper and state between the pious and the wicked, the regenerate and the unregenerate. And it is as plain as language can make it, that by the carnal mind is meant the mind of the natural man—the mind of all men, except such as have been saved "by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." (Tit. iii. 5.)

So that, if a man be carnal in the prevailing judgment, temper and affections of his mind, he is under

condemnation, dead in sin and meet for destruction: but if he be spiritual in the habitual prevailing temper of his soul, he is alive to God, and at peace with him: and the spiritual mind is, in proportion to its prevalency, the very essence of life and peace.

In further discoursing from the words of our text, we propose—

I. To illustrate a little more fully the nature and evidences of spiritual mindedness. And

II. To exhibit the happy consequences or reward of this spiritual character, namely: life and peace.

I. The carnal mind is enmity against God. All men are born sinners, or with a carnal heart. They inherit a corrupt nature from Adam. They are subject to the curse and penalty of the divine law. The sacred volume is full of evidence in attestation of this mournful fact. It does not recognise a single exception in the whole human family. And as all are justly condemned, so all would be strictly punished agreeably to the severe denunciations of the law, were it not for the interposition of God's sovereign grace and mercy through the Saviour.

There is a way in which the power and dominion of sin in the soul of man may be overcome and effectually subdued. Not however by any human effort or agency whatever. There is no inherent redeeming principle in man which can ever enable him to resist and successfully to encounter his native propensity to sin; so as to pursue a course of duty in conformity with the divine precepts. No attempts of this kind have ever yet suc-

ceeded. Nor indeed have any attempts been made with anything like a just appreciation of the difficulties to be surmounted, or of the purity of heart and life which the divine law requires. So thorough and radical is the change in the whole man demanded, that it is a work equal in magnitude to a new creation. And such it is represented and denominated in Scripture. It is a new birth; a new creation; a being born again; and born of the Spirit. And without this new birth or new creation, no man can see the kingdom of God, or be restored to his favour, or be qualified for heaven. Without it no man can render to God any acceptable service. Until such a change be wrought in him, he is God's enemy, and the slave of his lusts. He is carnally minded. This world and its good things engross his whole affections. He is therefore dead—dead in trespasses and in sins—and condemned to eternal death. He must be raised from the dead. He must be renewed in the temper and spirit of his mind, or he cannot see life. "For to be spiritually minded is life and peace."

Spiritual mindedness is that disposition implanted in the mind by the Holy Spirit, by which it is inclined to love, delight in, and attend to spiritual things. The spiritually minded highly appreciate spiritual blessings —are engaged in spiritual exercises—pursue spiritual objects—are influenced by spiritual motives—and experience spiritual joys. They seek to glorify God by a holy walk and conversation. Strive to be conformed to the law of God as a perfect rule of duty, while they depend for salvation solely on the mercy of God through

Jesus Christ. To them old things are passed away and all things are become new. They believe in Christ and repent of all sin. They crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts. They delight in the law of the Lord after the inward man—are meek, humble, submissive—full of mercy and good fruits—and make it their constant study to imbibe the spirit, and to imitate the example of the blessed Redeemer.

1st. The first evidence which we shall mention of this renovation of heart, which is the foundation of Christian hope and of spiritual joy, the source of all the Christian graces and the mainspring of all Christian practice, is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. A living, powerful, operative faith, which works by love, purifies the heart, and overcomes the world. "Whosoever believes that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God,"—that is, whosoever so believes him to be the Messiah, as to receive him for a Saviour from sin and hell, according to his commission to save. "To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." (John, i. 12. See also 1 John, v. 1.)

This faith is the gift of God, and is the beginning of spiritual life. By it the soul is united to Christ, and made a partaker of all the benefits of his glorious purchase.

2d. The spiritually minded man is habitually penitent. He lives under a constant sense of his great guilt and unworthiness in the sight of infinite justice and purity. He feels his vanity and nothingness. He is

conscious that, after all his endeavours to discharge his duty, he still falls far short of what he ought to do. This keeps him humble, lowly in heart, watchful, and exceedingly jealous of himself, lest he should offend. He does not indulge any known sin, though he has abundant reason continually to mourn over his imperfections, and to repent in dust and ashes at the footstool of sovereign mercy. "He that is born of God sinneth not"—that is, habitually or willingly, or with that bent of soul, that fixed steady purpose, with which he once did—"for his seed abideth in him," and his divine likeness and temper are communicated to him by the influences of the Holy Spirit. He maintains an unceasing warfare with his corruptions and lusts. He really wishes to be free from all sin, and to be holy as God is holy. This is the predominant reigning desire of his soul.

3d. The spiritually minded love to think of God. God is the great object of religion. And they who feel the spirit of it, are well affected towards him; or to use the language of Scripture, they have his fear in their hearts. (Jer. xxxii. 40.) Now a thoughtfulness about God, or the frequent adverting of the mind to him, is a natural expression of this fear. Nay, without such consideration of him, there cannot be that admiration of his excellencies, that confidence in his power and goodness, and that devotedness of heart to his service, which enter so deeply into the essence of religion, and which are the chief sources of delight and pleasure to a renewed mind. It is the character of the

wicked, that God is not in all their thoughts. (Ps. x. 4.) They do indeed sometimes think of him; but it is greatly against their will, and upon those occasions only when Providence forces the idea of him upon their consciencies. On the contrary, it is the character of the religious man that he "sets the Lord always before him." (Ps. xvi. 8.) He not only lays it down as a settled principle with him, that God always sees him, and that therefore he ought to act as in his sight, but he is disposed and apt to think of him. His attention is quickly turned towards this glorious object, by circumstances which have not the like effect on other men. His enjoyments and afflictions, his temptations and difficulties, his dangers and escapes, yea his follies and sins have a tendency to lead him to God, the giver of every good and perfect gift, as well as "a very present help in trouble," and "the author and finisher of our faith." (Ps. xlvi. 1; Heb. xii. 2.) He is an habitual inquirer after God, and he cannot be content without finding him. Now, though God be not far from every one of us, and though at the first glance at his works we may perceive striking proofs of his being and perfections, yet we must seek him, if haply we may feel after him and find him. (Acts, xvii. 27.)

The infinite Eternal—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—the Creator, Preserver, Governor, Redeemer, Sanctifier, and Judge of men—is ever an object of awful and delightful contemplation to a serious spiritual heavenly-minded man. This is an object which fills and overwhelms the soul. His power, wisdom, justice, holiness,

mercy, and love—all infinite and all harmonious in the glorious plan of redemption for sinners—engross and exhaust the utmost stretch of his faculties and affections. Divine knowledge, with all the happy fruits of it, is not to be attained without close attention and diligent application. "The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein." (Ps. cxi. 2.) Wherefore religion prompts the Christian to withdraw from the world at proper seasons, to impose silence on his tumultuous thoughts and passions, and so to engage his heart to approach unto God.

4th. Hence, addressing God in prayer, is another eminent expression of religion, and distinguishing characteristic of the spiritually minded. Prayer is the offering up of our desires to God. And is generally considered as including in it an acknowledgment of our dependence on God, and of his infinite perfections; thankfulness for his various mercies; a confession of our manifold sins; and a supplication of all needful blessings for ourselves and others. I shall not notice in this place, either the frivolous objections which have been made to this duty, or the qualifications necessary to its acceptable performance, or the divers objects of it, or the several acts included in it.

That prayer is a duty, is so evident, that we may regard it as among the simple dictates of reason and conscience—as congenial with the feelings of human nature. It is so natural to all men sometimes, that probably no man has ever yet lived so perfectly hard-

ened as, in no instance, to have involuntarily raised his thoughts to the Deity and to have supplicated his mercy and favour.

But the spiritually minded man—the man who has been renewed by the Spirit of grace and truth—who delights in spiritual things—who knows how to estimate the value of his own spirit—who minds its interests as the one thing needful—who walks by faith and not by sight—alone does or can realize the immense importance and exalted nature of this duty as enjoined in the sacred Scriptures. He regards it as a most precious privilege. It is the good and the joy of his soul. His retirement is sacred to him. He there converses with God the father of his spirit whom he loves, whom he wishes to be like, and in whose blissful presence he hopes to dwell forever. An habitual attention to this duty in a proper manner and from right views and motives, may be considered as an unequivocal test of a man's religion. It proves him to be a child of God. It is pre-eminently the work of a spiritually minded man. It is a work in which the carnal worldly man engages with reluctance, if he attempt it at all—a work for which he has no relish—and which he never can perform acceptably and profitably.

If we were to search for one strong satisfactory incontestable mark or proof of spiritual mindedness in preference to all others, it would be found to be a prayerful temper—a devotional frame of mind—an habitual prevailing desire to commune with God—to confess our sins with all humility and penitence at the foot of the

cross — to wrestle with God in prayer for the blessing of his grace and salvation.

5th. A due regard to public worship is another evidence of the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit on the heart. I mean when this duty is performed as it ought to be. The mere act of meeting with the people of God in his temple, affords at the present day, in most instances at least, very little evidence of sincerity or of any gracious disposition.

It was the practice of good men, in the earliest ages of the world, to call upon the name of the Lord in a social and public manner. (Gen. iv. 26.) This practice continued under the Jewish dispensation, sanctioned and commanded by Jehovah; and it has continued ever since the introduction of Christianity under the same high warrant and authority. The man therefore who slights or neglects this divine institution gives unequivocal proof to the world that he does not fear God or believe the gospel of his Son. So far then as this test applies, we may with certainty determine who are not on the Lord's side or spiritually minded. However we may be deceived in regard to those who outwardly and with apparent engagedness attend to this duty, yet with regard to those who make light of it or neglect it altogether, there can be no question. The various and obvious advantages resulting to ourselves and others from public worship need not be here specified.

6th. The next mark or evidence of spiritual mindedness which we have selected as worthy of particular notice, is obedience to the will of God. An obedience,

I mean, which has an immediate respect to the will of God. There are multitudes who, in some cases, do the thing which is right, while at the same time, the divine authority is never taken into the account at all. They are wholly moved by some worldly interest or consideration. Now, in actions of this kind, however excellent and beneficial in themselves, there is certainly nothing of religion. Hence numbers of a decent external deportment are justly excluded from the rank and denomination of good or pious men, in the gospel acceptation of these terms. But the real Christian will have regard to God in his obedience. The question with him in every doubtful matter is, what God would have him to do? And, with the Psalmist, he sincerely prays: "Teach me thy way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path." (Ps. xxvii. 11.)

He is strictly conscientious, not merely in the performance of the more plain and ordinary offices of life, but in those instances in which his duty and interest seem to clash, and in matters too which are out of the view of others, and in which he cannot be influenced by motives of honour and applause. It is an obedience which springs from love to God and a desire to please him; and from a clear conviction of the intrinsic excellence of real holiness. A good man accounts it his highest happiness to be like God—rejoices in his favour and protection—and is allured to a cordial compliance with his duty in instances which are painful and self-denying, by a recollection of God's mercies, especially his redemption by Jesus Christ.

His obedience is regular, cheerful, and universal. "Then shall I not be ashamed (said David) when I have respect unto all thy commandments." (Ps. cxix. 6.) He can indeed keep none of them perfectly. No mere man can do this. Yet it is his earnest wish and study to be conformed to them all. He obeys therefore under a constant and humbling sense of his manifold imperfections. So that he renounces the most distant idea of ever working out a righteousness of his own, or of meriting the favour of God by his obedience. After he has done all which is commanded him according to the best of his ability, he readily acknowledges, with deep contrition of spirit, that he is an unprofitable servant. (Luke, xvii. 10.)

It would not consist with the limits of this discourse to enumerate, much less to enlarge upon, all the duties which we owe to God, to our neighbour and to ourselves. They are all implied in obedience to the divine law, and they are all duly regarded by the consistent Christian. Here also we have a safe and infallible rule by which to judge of our whole conduct: whether, and how far we are therein actuated and guided by the Holy Spirit. "He that keepeth God's commandments, dwelleth in God, and God in him." (1 John, iii. 24.) St. Paul also, to the same purpose, says: "That if we live in the Spirit, we are to walk in the Spirit." And "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." (Gal. v. 22, 23, 24.) In short, the only sure evidences of our being led by the Spirit of God, are a serious and steadfast belief

of what the same Spirit has taught us, and a conscientious obedience to all the precepts of the gospel.

7th. If we love God, and are guided by his Spirit, we shall use our best endeavours to advance the glory of God in the world. By glorifying God, I mean the displaying of his perfections to the view of our fellow-men, in order to excite their reverence for God, and to animate them to his service. To this object, every Christian, in his measure, contributes, by walking agreeably to his profession. It is the command of Christ: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." (Matt. v. 16.) Something more however seems to be implied in this duty than was included in the obedience described under the preceding head. We are required to exert ourselves, according to our talents and opportunities, to spread the knowledge of the truth, to promote the cause of virtue and holiness, and to save men from temporal and everlasting ruin. To make them sharers with us of life and peace. To devise and execute schemes for the good of mankind, and to extend the knowledge and the influence of the religion of Jesus among the ignorant and the perishing. This is the way in which Christians, and Christian ministers in a pre-eminent manner, are called to glorify God and to manifest their love to the Saviour. This is the way in which many have spent their lives; whose names have been embalmed in the memory of thousands who have reaped the happy fruit of their disinterested labours.

8th. And lastly: We shall present you with a brief

summary of the principal characteristic features of the spiritually minded.

The spiritual man is just, peaceable, kind, merciful, charitable, meek, humble, ready to forgive injuries, benevolent, liberal, faithful, diligent in business, resigned and submissive to the divine will, and contented with his lot in life. He loves the brethren because they love God. He is the friend and benefactor of the friendless—of the widow and the orphan—of the poor and the afflicted. He is tender of his neighbour's reputation. He cultivates that amiable, quiet, tolerant, conciliatory temper which is so peculiarly characteristic of the followers of Him who endured all things for our sake, and went about doing good in the midst of the hatred, malice and persecution of the world. He cares for his own soul and for the souls of others. He enjoys peace of conscience, and he wishes others to enjoy it. He knows what it is to have passed from death unto life, and he longs to see others undergo the like happy change, and to be restored to the favour of God which is life, and to experience his loving kindness which is better than life. The truly spiritually minded man is strictly and eminently a philanthropist. He seeks to promote the best interests of his fellow-men; and from the purest motives. He is a stranger to covetousness, to envy and malice, to falsehood, fraud and deceit. He lives in peace, as far as it is possible, with all men. He is an Israelite in whom is no guile. He is careful to give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God. He accommodates himself to all men in matters

that are indifferent, and so far as is consistent with a good conscience: not seeking his own profit, but the profit of many that they may be saved. (1 Cor. x. 32, 34.) He studies the capacities, tempers, and circumstances of others, and acts accordingly. He imposes a restraint on his passions, and exercises forbearance and self-denial for the sake of peace. He will say, under similar circumstances, as Abraham said to Lot: "Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, for we are brethren. If thou wilt take the left hand, then will I go to the right: or if thou depart to the right hand, then will I go to the left." (Gen. xiii. 8, 9.) He suffers long and is not easily provoked. (James, iii. 17.) He not only endeavours to live peaceably, but to promote peace among others and in the Church of Christ. To be spiritually minded is to be eminently devotional, and much engaged, nay, habitually engaged in the service of God. It is to be like God.

It would be impossible, within the compass of an ordinary sermon, to dilate on all or even many of the characteristic traits or peculiar features of the spiritually minded. The fruits of the Spirit are exceedingly numerous and precious. If we have touched on some of the most striking and distinguishing of these as evidences and illustrations of that state and character of mind intended by the apostle in our text, we have accomplished our purpose. We supposed that we could best explain the nature of spiritual mindedness by adverting to its fruits. Such fruits as are evidently the product of the Holy Spirit, and which cannot be mis-

taken or easily counterfeited. Faith in Jesus, penitence for sin, love to God and love to man—these are graces which none but God, the Spirit of grace and truth, can impart. And the man who possesses them is an heir of life eternal, of peace that passeth all understanding, of joy unspeakable and full of glory. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." (Rom. viii. 1.)

II. This introduces the second part of our subject: to which we solicit your attention but for a very few moments.

"But to be spiritually minded is *life* and *peace*."

Life and peace are the consequence—the natural and necessary effect—as well as the glorious reward of this gracious, heavenly, spiritual frame of mind.

In proportion as we are delivered from the influence and dominion of sin, in the same proportion do we approximate to the nature and character of the holy spirits in heaven. And in the same degree are we delivered from misery, the necessary concomitant of sin. Where sin exists, there must be misery. There is no peace—there can be no solid peace to the wicked. It is absurd to expect peace, while the bitterest enemy of our peace reigns in the heart and holds the soul in captivity. Yet most men are absurd enough, and sufficiently infatuated to seek for peace while they remain in this bondage. It is a vain pursuit. God is angry with the wicked every day. His curse is upon them. And sentence of death

is pronounced against them. They are the servants of sin and satan,—a servitude at once dishonourable and ruinous to both soul and body. From it men derive no comfort in life: from it they expect no support in death. And why should they? God, being at the head of the universe—the sovereign Judge and Father of all his rational creatures—the fountain of good—the only source of blessedness—it follows, by an irresistible necessity, that whoever is opposed to him must be wretched. The enemies of God, it is true, talk much of happiness, and speculate much about it, and imagine it within their reach. But their continued search for it—their earnest inquiries after it—their unwearied efforts to obtain it—prove that they know nothing of the matter. The Bible offers them no consolation: reason furnishes them none: experience gives them none. For the truth of this position, I might confidently appeal to the most fortunate and distinguished of this world's favourites in every department and condition of life in which the fairest trial has been or could be made. The fact is, it is not in the creature—it is not in any created object—to bestow what the soul demands, and is continually sighing for in secret. The Father of our spirits alone can say to the restless, troubled, unsatisfied spirit: "peace, be still. I am thy portion: in me is fulness of joy." This is the grand secret of human happiness.

The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him: but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him. (Ezra, viii. 22.) "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." (Rom. viii. 14, 16, 17.)

It would be easy to demonstrate from analogy and from revelation, that no rational being can enjoy real peace and happiness, except he resemble God in his nature and character. I say there must be a resemblance and a growing likeness. God is a Spirit: and he is holy. Man therefore must be spiritual and holy before he can taste the cup of unmingled felicity. Before he can relish the society or the employment of the heavenly world. This is a position as capable of the clearest demonstration as any proposition whatever in abstract or physical science. And every opinion entertained in opposition to this may be proved to be utterly absurd, and, of course, indefensible. It is in direct hostility with the whole system and economy of the divine government; and with the very nature and constitution of things.

To be spiritually minded therefore is life and peace. It is the only way to enjoy life and to possess solid peace of conscience in this world: it is the only way in which we can be qualified for life and happiness beyond the grave.

Again: Holiness and happiness are just as closely and necessarily connected as sin and misery. To seek after holiness therefore, or conformity with the will and law of God, and yet to be willing to be banished from his

presence and to be miserable forever, implies a palpable contradiction. It is therefore a very irrational as well as dangerous dogma. What God has united, let no man put asunder.

A few additional remarks shall now conclude this discourse.

1st. The spiritual mindedness of the genuine Christian whose fruits are so pure, and holy, and happy, is utterly opposed to, and essentially different from, that kind of spiritual knowledge or animal fervour which puffeth up, and which nourishes pride. Which leads men to think more highly of themselves than they ought to think—to talk a great deal and to do little. Which inclines them to underrate and to censure others —to seek out and expose their faults—to condemn their coldness and want of zeal: while they boast of their own exalted views and raptures, their delightful and extraordinary experience of the special love and kindness of God.

There is not a little of this sickly, ostentatious, obtrusive kind of counterfeit of the gracious work of the Holy Spirit; which is the effect of ignorance, of hypocrisy, or of enthusiasm: and which cannot be too rigidly condemned. It savours not of the spirit of truth, and gentleness, and charity. It pretends to much devotional feeling and high-toned sentimental fervour, while it is utterly destitute of that holy unction which is necessary to give it life and vigour. It centres in self. Self is its object, and its idol. It says, or seems to say to other

men: "Stand off. Ye are not so good as I am. Ye are sinners: I am holy."

Such men do not know, or they do not recollect, that boasting and ostentation are a flat contradiction to the very supposal of the ordinary graces boasted of. Because humility and modesty lie at the foundation and enter into the very nature of the most eminent Christian graces. If a man think himself endowed with the gifts and graces of the Spirit, let him show it in his meek deportment, and by his good works. But let him not trumpet the fame of it abroad, lest the very doing of it should be taken for a demonstration that he has not the Spirit of God, but a spirit of delusion and falsehood.

2d. The Scripture furnishes no ground for any man to expect or to believe that the Spirit of God will lead him by an inward voice speaking to him and known only to himself.

To be spiritually minded therefore is not to enjoy peculiar communications from the divine Spirit of a new or extraordinary kind. Pretensions to such inward light and to such extraordinary revelations have been often made: and they are sometimes made at the present day. They are however, in all cases, delusive and false—the work of the father of lies—intended to deceive and to destroy those who trust in them. Such a pretence is in direct opposition to the whole written word of God. It is contrary to the experience of the most enlightened, pious, humble, and actively useful Christians of every age—of those best exercised in the ways of God, and

most thoroughly tried by temptation, affliction, and persecution.

Did the apostles themselves pretend to any such thing? Or did the primitive professors of Christianity and the martyrs of the church own anything but the written word of God as their rule of faith and practice? Did they acknowledge that the Spirit whispered anything to their souls by any immediate voice or impulse distinct from the Scripture? Which yet they would have certainly had a right to expect, and would certainly have found, had this been the way by which the Spirit of God usually led believers.

This pretence opens the door wide to all profaneness and licentiousness of living. It has been and commonly is employed to set aside the plain and positive commands of the Spirit as contained in the Bible. The world has witnessed its pernicious effects. No man can assure either himself or others that the Spirit of God speaks inwardly to him. He can have no evidence of the fact, nor can he exhibit any evidence of it to his fellow-men. His own imagination becomes his rule and standard of doctrine and duty, as soon as he forsakes the revealed and recorded word of God, and trusts to those internal suggestions which he vainly attributes to the Spirit; and which always favour the natural bent and desires of his own heart.

3d. But although the Spirit of God does not communicate any new revelation to men in any way whatever, yet it is his office to take of the things that are Christ's and to show them unto us, and to make them effectual

to our salvation. It is his special office to impart spiritual mindedness, as we have explained the term. And he only can do it.

Hence appears the radical deficiency of every system of virtue or religion which rejects the necessity of a divine agency in changing the heart, or in bringing men from a carnal to a spiritual state and character. The best of them are utterly incapable of converting men from the love of sin and the practice of sin to the love and practice of genuine holiness.

4th. Finally. There can be no religion without unfeigned sincerity of heart. God demands the heart—the supreme undivided affections of the heart. He will not accept a partial offering or admit of any rival or of any compromise. "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." (John, iv. 24.) The whole truth of the gospel must be embraced at whatever risk or sacrifice. The Saviour must be loved, and his cross assumed, and his commands obeyed in all their extent and purity. And he has told us that his kingdom is not of this world—that it is a spiritual kingdom—and that none but the truly regenerated spiritually minded can ever enter it. Nothing carnal, nothing worldly, nothing unholy, can ever find a refuge there.

Brethren, who would not be a Christian? Behold the conditions! How exalted is the character, how great the qualifications, how rich and glorious the prize? Who does not desire to gain it? Who would lose his own soul? Who would barter life and peace, happiness here

and happiness hereafter, for any earthly consideration? Who would do this deliberately and systematically? But are not some of my hearers doing it practically and most effectually? Have you ever sincerely purposed to seek the salvation of the gospel? If you have not: what infinite mercy do you slight! What infinite good do you reject!

Your own consciences tell you that you are not pursuing the course most to your advantage. You carry with you a prevailing conviction of this truth. And no artifice of yours or of the adversary has ever yet been able to efface it utterly from your minds. It is the kindly warning of the Spirit, who will not suffer you to remain at perfect ease and to fall asleep in sin. He, from time to time, brings home to your hearts the unwelcome and alarming thought, that the Word of God condemns you to misery without end and without mixture; if you persevere in your unbelief. And that presently there will be no remedy—no space left for repentance—no more sacrifice for sin—no hope of redemption and deliverance. *Now* the Spirit of God is striving with you. He will not always strive with you. Listen therefore to his warning voice while you may. Pray for his effectual working on your hearts. Pray for a spiritual temper and disposition. That you may be delivered from a carnal mind which is death: and be renewed and sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

And may the Almighty Spirit of grace and truth make us free from the law of sin and death; and en-

gage us sincerely to follow Christ in the regeneration! (Matt. xix. 28.) May he teach us, "that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present evil world: Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." (Tit. ii. 12, 13, 14.)

THE NATURE AND DUTY

OF

EVANGELICAL REPENTANCE.

[NEWTOWN, LONG ISLAND, 1810.]

THE NATURE AND DUTY

OF

EVANGELICAL REPENTANCE.*

I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.
Luke, v. 32.

While Jesus was at Capernaum, the principal city of Galilee, and the ordinary place of his residence, he "saw a publican, named Levi, or Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom, and he said unto him, Follow me. And he left all, rose up, and followed him. And Levi made him a great feast in his own house: and there was a great company of publicans, and of others, that sat down with them. But their scribes and pharisees murmured against his disciples, saying, Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners? And Jesus, answering, said unto them, They that are whole, need not a physician, but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

Such, my friends, was the gracious errand on which Jesus came into the world. He came to save lost sinners. He came to deliver them from the dominion and the condemnation of sin. He came to restore them to

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the image and favour of that God whose righteous displeasure they had incurred. He came as the physician of souls, to heal the sick, to comfort the desponding, to bind up the broken in heart, to strengthen the feeble, to give sight to the blind, and life to the helpless and the perishing.

He came not, he tells us, to call the righteous. But who are the righteous? Who were righteous then? Who are righteous now? Has there ever been a righteous man among the descendants of fallen Adam? Righteous, I mean, in a legal sense—righteous through obedience to the divine law? Perfectly free from the pollution and the guilt of sin—as pure and holy as the angels in heaven? No, brethren, there have been none: there are none such upon the earth. For, "as it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one. There is none that understandeth: there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." "For the law hath concluded all under sin, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God." (Rom. iii. 10.)

Why then did our Lord make the distinction contained in the text? He made it, in the first place, probably to intimate, that as there are but two descriptions of reasonable beings in the universe, namely, the righteous and sinners; and as his mission was designed exclusively for sinners, so then would it follow from the universality of sin among mankind, that he came to call them all to repentance and to holiness of life.

He made it, in the second place, chiefly, no doubt, on account of the scribes and pharisees who murmured against him for eating with publicans and sinners. They were so righteous in their own eyes, so vain of their superior attainments, and of their rigid performance of such external rites as rendered them honourable in the sight of the world, that they disdained to receive instruction or rebuke from any man, much less from a man of the Saviour's humble rank and pretensions. It was vain therefore to call on such men to repent; because, in their own view, they had nothing to repent of. They were good enough already. Our Lord then may be considered as administering to them a severe and pointed reproof: as if he had said: "It is true, I sit down with publicans and sinners, because it was for such I came into the world. But if ye are indeed as good as ye profess to be, I have no concern with you. The righteous need none of my warnings or of my aid. Keep ye to the law, since ye prefer it, and expect to live by it. But let transgressors repent and seek comfort in me. Let such as labour and are heavy laden come unto me; for I will relieve them of their burdens and give rest unto their souls. Let the poor in spirit, the mourning prodigal, the self-convicted criminal, lift up their heads and rejoice: for to the poor my gospel is preached. To the captives liberty is proclaimed, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." (Isa. lxi. 1.) These are the wretched sinners whom Jesus then called to repentance: these are they whom he now calls to repentance. And he calls them by his

word, by his Spirit, by his providence, by his ambassadors, and especially does he call on all men everywhere to repent, by that offering which he once made of himself to satisfy divine justice, to exhibit the dreadful nature of sin, and God's righteous displeasure against it.

The object of this discourse is to unfold the nature of evangelical repentance, and to urge the duty upon my hearers.

I. In the first place then: What is repentance?

The original word, most frequently employed in the New Testament to designate repentance, denotes, agreeably to its comprehensive signification, a reformation of life and manners resulting from right views and motives. An entire change of mind. A renunciation of sin from hatred to it, and an embracing of the truth as it is in Jesus Christ from love to it.

"Repentance unto life (as it is well defined in our excellent Catechism, and in perfect accordance with the genuine import of the original term,) is a saving grace whereby a sinner out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, doth with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of, and endeavour after new obedience."

It is called a saving grace, or repentance unto life, (Acts, xi. 18,) because it is inseparably connected with salvation; and also to distinguish it from the sorrow of the world which worketh death. (2 Cor. vii. 10.)

Brethren, to prevent mistakes, I beg leave here to remark, that repentance is an essential part of the

Lord's plan of mercy and grace to sinners. Some indeed contend that repentance does not properly belong to the gospel. They seem to suppose that salvation by grace, is salvation for sinners continuing impenitent. And they charge those with returning to the law and subjecting men to its yoke, who insist on repentance and works meet for repentance. This is the error of Antinomians, and of multitudes who disown the name while they admit the principle. It is an error which leads directly to a licentious practice. And for this reason, were there no other, ought to be discountenanced and rejected. The practical effects of any religious tenet afford, in general, a good test of its soundness and utility.

On this subject we are to distinguish between the law and the gospel. The language of the law is, "obey and live." "The soul that sinneth it shall die." "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." (Gal. iii. 10.) It does not offer the slightest hope even to the penitent. Repentance is no satisfaction for the smallest departure from its precepts. But "by the law is the knowledge of sin." (Rom. iii. 20.) In it we read the sentence of our condemnation. We discover the odious and evil nature of sin; the justice of God in punishing all who are infected with it: and our own deplorable and helpless condition as subjects of the divine government. It is a schoolmaster, as the apostle happily expresses it, to bring us unto Christ, that we may be justified by faith. (Gal. iii. 24.) Had Jesus never obeyed and suffered and died, our repentance could not have availed us; though the

law would still have remained holy and just and good, and our obligations to honour it, would not have been in the least diminished. Sinners might then have repented, that is, they might have been grieved and alarmed and terrified at the prospect of punishment; but they could not have repented unto life. Else had the atonement of Christ been unnecessary. Had it been possible for sinners to have been saved without a Mediator, no Mediator would have been provided. But though we now live under a gracious dispensation, agreeably to which, pardon and eternal life are the free gifts of God, yet we are commanded to repent and to forsake every wicked way. No truth is more clearly revealed. It is the constant voice of Christ, the apostles, and of all the sacred writers, that without repentance there is no salvation. "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

Brethren, in contemplating this, or any other scriptural doctrine by itself, there is danger of taking a part for the whole of the Christian system. When therefore we assert that repentance is essential to salvation, and that every sincere penitent will be saved, we do not mean to exclude other graces, or to confound them with it. We would not give pre-eminence to one qualification for eternal life, when others are declared to be equally necessary, and when all must coexist in the same subject. The fact is, that each includes, or necessarily implies the rest. Separate the Christian graces, and you destroy the unity and mar the beauty of the Christian fabric. It is one harmonious whole. And such it will remain forever, in spite of all the attempts of human

ingenuity to model it according to an arbitrary fancy, and to arrange its several parts to suit a preconceived artificial system. Much of this has been done; and grievously to the injury of truth and to the wounding of charity. The subject under consideration has not escaped.

Repentance and faith, their nature, their order, their relative rank and importance, have given rise to volumes of ingenious speculation and bitter controversy. Let us, my friends, rather weep over the imperfections of the wise and the good than suffer our own feelings and prejudices to mingle with those of the advocates of either of the opinions which prevail on this subject. Let us not approach the threshold of the dispute. There is no ground for it in Scripture. The Bible is a plain book. Its distinguishing doctrines and practical precepts may be readily comprehended. The path of duty is clearly marked out; and the way to heaven easily discovered by those who humbly seek it.

In almost every instance of genuine conversion, legal repentance, as it is commonly styled, or legal terrors and convictions, will be found to precede faith, and may be considered as the commencement or as the first stage in the progress of this great work. But evangelical or saving repentance is a consequence of faith, or is simultaneous with it, and can never exist without it. Whereas legal repentance frequently takes place without faith, and without producing any beneficial effects whatever. Were this distinction fully understood and admitted, there would remain little room for controversy on the

subject. The Lord Jesus Christ hath magnified the law and made it honourable. And "him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins." (Isa. xlii. 21; Acts, v. 31.)

I shall now attempt to give you a brief sketch of the process of repentance: of the means leading to it: the particulars of which it consists: together with some of its prominent features and essential characteristics.

1st. The first step towards repentance, or the first ingredient of it, is probably serious consideration.

The great mass of mankind live without reflection. They do not consider their ways, as they are exhorted and commanded to do by the Lord of Hosts. (Hag. i. 7.) They act as others have done, and as others are doing around them, without stopping to inquire why or wherefore. They diligently, earnestly and perseveringly attend to those things which are obviously interesting to them in this life, or which they imagine to be so. What the world accounts great and good and honourable and desirable, they covet and seek with sufficient ardour and zeal. On these matters they often employ much intense thought and painful research. They are fruitful in expedients and plans to compass their designs. But they look not beyond the present world. They do not consider why it is that they live, or why it is that they die. They do not consider what it is that they have to do; what it is that will render them truly happy; what is the will of God their Maker and their Judge; or what is to be their lot hereafter. They do not look to the law

of God, as the standard of duty, with a view to ascertain their own true moral character as accountable beings in the sight of God. Could men be brought seriously and steadily to ponder on these momentous subjects, they would not long remain unmoved and impenitent. Hence we mention serious consideration as a principal step towards repentance, or as a constituent part of it.

Thoughtless, careless sinners do not repent, while they remain thoughtless and inconsiderate. If their minds be not awakened to a lively contemplation of their sinful and perishing condition, they will feel no desire to change it. Why should they? Their eyes must be opened, in some measure, upon their guilt and wretchedness, or they will never, like the prodigal son, think seriously of returning to their father's house for relief and protection. What then will bring men to serious consideration? Perhaps a sense of danger most frequently does this. It is probable that the greater part of real believers were first impressed with terror—with a dread of suffering the penalty due to transgression.

This view of the subject corresponds both with experience and with the representations of Scripture. Temporal and eternal sufferings are exhibited in Scripture as motives to repentance. The terrors of the Lord, the threatenings of vengeance, the holiness and the denunciations of the law, are set forth and urged home upon the consciences of sinners to drive them to the earnest inquiry of what they must do to escape the wrath to come and to make up their peace with God. It is natural and right that men should desire happiness and

hate misery. When therefore they behold misery as likely to ensue from their sins, it is quite natural that they should feel sorrow, remorse and regret. And this, I admit, they may feel to a very great and even to an awful degree, without one correct sentiment or emotion in regard to the law of God, the nature of sin, or the atonement of Christ. Thus far then repentance (if, indeed, it deserve the name of repentance) may proceed without faith, and without any lasting or salutary effects; except in some few instances, a partial reformation of the external conduct. Still, however, for the most part, the work does proceed further. Hence,

2d. When the attention has been thus arrested, and, as it were, absorbed by the concerns of the soul, the sinner soon begins to know something of his real character. The further he examines, the more of his own moral depravity, and of the purity and extent of the divine law does he discover. He presently perceives that as a transgressor of the divine law, he is justly and necessarily exposed to the divine wrath. He beholds infinite holiness, and infinite justice, and infinite power in array against him. All hope of favour from his Judge, on the ground of his own imperfect obedience, vanishes from his breast. He is conscious that he never has obeyed in any one particular; but that the very best actions of his life, even those which have been most highly approved and applauded by the world, have resulted from selfish, unworthy motives; and that no act, however virtuous it may appear in itself, can be morally good which proceeds from a wrong or wicked

principle. The great fountain of iniquity, hitherto concealed within a heart that is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, is gradually laid open before him. He discovers that the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men: and that God looketh not on the outward appearance, but on the heart. The infinite majesty, glory and excellence of the divine character and government, to which he has been all his life long opposed, overwhelm him with a sense of his vileness, which, were there no way of escape and deliverance, would speedily drive him to despair. But while the agonies of an awakened and guilty conscience would seem to have risen to the highest pitch of human endurance, when the conviction has fastened upon the soul that death and hell are his merited portion and his certain doom; yet the sword of the Spirit will inflict another wound more grievous than all the rest, and which will cause by its anguish even the terrors of death and hell to sink into comparative nothingness. Pain and misery, in every form and degree, and especially when endured or anticipated as the penalty of sin, cannot fail to be distressing; but to an offender coming to his right mind, there is a consideration more distressing than even the fear of the severest punishment. Such is the anguish of a disobedient child returning to his duty towards an affectionate and indulgent parent. And such will be the keener anguish of the convinced sinner while he reflects that it is God his Creator, his Preserver, his kind Benefactor against whom he has rebelled; whose goodness he has requited with

the basest ingratitude; whose tender mercies he has despised; whose holy name he has profaned; whose glorious perfections he has wantonly dishonoured.—Hence,

3d. His naturally hard and stubborn heart will be melted down with unfeigned sorrow for sin, as that abominable thing which God hateth. He now views sin as infinitely evil in itself, because committed against an infinitely holy God; as a direct opposition to his nature and government, and as tending to the destruction of everything good and happy in the universe. This is the source of his grief and bitterness of soul—a grief and a bitterness which are voluntary and disinterested. That is, he does not grieve as a malefactor under the rod of justice, but as a child who has wandered from the bosom of the best of fathers—who is anxious to return and humble himself at his feet—who sees no other obstacle between him and his parent's favour than the wickedness of his own heart and the folly of his past conduct. He grieves because he has offended so good a father, not solely because he dreads the punishment which he knows to be justly due to his criminal disobedience. He desires, if possible, to make amends for his misconduct. This he would do by any sacrifice, were it in his power to make a sacrifice, which could, in the slightest degree, atone for his offences.

Such is the true penitent's temper, such are his views, such his sorrow, such his wishes, such his self-abhorrence, such his ingenuous relentings of heart, such his discernment of the beauty and excellence of divine things, such

his acquiescence in the righteousness of God and the justice of the sinner's doom, that he feels constrained to exclaim:

> "Should sudden vengeance seize my breath,
> I must pronounce thee just in death:
> And if my soul were sent to hell,
> Thy righteous law approves it well."—*Watts*.

But he does not stop here. He cannot consent to lie down in everlasting burnings; and to remain forever at enmity with his Maker, however justly such a lot might be awarded him. He therefore looks anxiously around him for help. Where shall he find it? Who will deliver him? Can he—dare he lift an eye to heaven? Behold stern justice—inflexible, inexorable justice meets him at every turn, and demands from him the uttermost farthing, and threatens to execute the extremity of the law in case of failure. He has failed. He is bankrupt. He has nothing to pay. Of what avail then are his tears, and confessions, and promises of future obedience? Can these have a retrospective influence and value? even were his purpose of reformation admitted to be sincere and fixed? Say, hearer, do you think that mere penitence of this kind will be accepted, so as to obliterate the past, and procure him pardon and favour? Is it reasonable, is it equitable that it should? What amends can penitence make to a violated law? What satisfaction does it proffer to public justice? None at all. And the sincere penitent feels his poverty and his nothingness. He feels that he is as helpless as he is guilty. And it is just in this crisis, when every refuge seems to

fail him, when heaven and earth seem, as it were, to frown upon him, and to leave him without pity to his fate, that the voice of Jesus reaches his heart, saying, "There is help in me, I am the way, the truth, and the life. Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out. Look unto me thou humble, trembling, dying sinner, for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby any can be saved. My grace shall be sufficient for thee." The voice of Jesus for once is welcome. He listens as though the name of a Saviour had never been proclaimed in his hearing before.

When a criminal, sentenced to death, receives a pardon under the gallows, we can form some faint conception of the joy with which so unexpected a favour will overwhelm him. But who, that has not experienced it, can conceive the rapture with which the mourning penitent will hail the first dawn of the sun of righteousness upon his soul? His joy is unspeakable and full of glory! Thus it appears,

4th. In the fourth place: That evangelical repentance implies faith in Christ. Or, an apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ. Or, a believing application to God for pardon only through Jesus Christ.

Unbelievers, it is true, may have some just conceptions of God and of his law. They may perceive themselves to be sinners and liable to punishment. They may mourn on account of their guilt and their misery. Nay, they may, in a great measure, reform their lives, and yet remain destitute of comfort and of hope. They must advance a step further, or all is darkness, doubts

and fears. Not a ray of consolation can beam upon the soul unless it flow from Christ. The real penitent therefore, beholding in the sacrifice of Christ, the infinite evil of sin which required such a glorious victim to atone for its demerit, beholds also ample provision made for his escape from deserved wrath, and for his justification before God, his Sovereign and his Judge. He sees how mercy can be shown consistently with the demands of justice. He believes the promises of God, and cordially approves the plan of grace and redemption which infinite love has devised. His despair gives place to an humble hope of pardon and acceptance, founded exclusively on the merits and sufferings of the Saviour;—not, in the smallest degree, on any merit in his own repentance and reformation. So that he can honestly say with the apostle: "I count all things but loss, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but the righteousness which is of God by faith."

This is that profitable, permanent, and soul-satisfying repentance which is the gift of God—the gracious work of the Holy Spirit. It tends to abase the sinner, to exalt the Saviour, and to glorify the riches of his grace. It leads to purity of heart and life; to the love of God and the love of man. It excites in the breast a firm, invincible opposition to everything sinful. And in this respect there is an essential difference between the evangelical and the legal penitent. The legal penitent is influenced solely by fear. He dreads the painful consequences of sin,—the hell that awaits him in the eternal

world: and hence arise all his sorrows and all his anguish. Were it possible for him to enjoy his sins and yet be saved, he would never be grieved on account of his sins, nor would he ever wish to forsake them. Like Judas, he is terrified when he beholds the avenging sword of the Almighty suspended over his guilty head. Like Felix, he trembles when his vices are arraigned before the bar of truth and conscience: and like these he is a stranger to that generous sorrow which flows from an humbling conviction of his own vileness. He perceives no loveliness in Jesus Christ that his soul should desire him. He can have no conception of him as a Saviour from sin. He loves sin. But as a criminal, he fain would accept of Christ as a kind Saviour from future torments. This is all that he desires of Christ. And it is greatly to be feared that multitudes who imagine themselves penitent, have no higher end in view. Not considering that sin is that enemy of their peace which Christ came to subdue; and that he cannot save them from hell except by saving them from sin. This leads me,

5th. In the last place, to remark that there can be no genuine repentance without a corresponding reformation in the life and conduct.

Repentance, as has been already stated, implies both a change of principles or a change of heart, and a change of life. The latter is the natural expression, the necessary effect, the only sure evidence of the former. Repentance is not a work of the closet only. It does not consist merely in tears and sighs and terrors, nor in acts

of austerity and mortification. Though many imagine it signifies nothing more. And hence they are prone to regard it as a degrading, grievous kind of penance, just calculated to render life gloomy and miserable, without making it any better. Hence too they are apt to suppose that sickness, or misfortune, or approaching dissolution is absolutely necessary to prepare the mind for commencing it. This is a sentiment however which receives no support from reason or revelation. It is as ruinous as it is false. Repentance is not the work of a particular period or season. It is not the work of a sick bed or of a dying hour. It is not the work of a day or of a year. It is the business of life. And no life can be too long for its accomplishment. To repent, in the language of Scripture, is to depart from our evil ways; to cease to do evil, and learn to do well; to cleanse our hands and purify our hearts; to be separated from the world; to crucify the affections and lusts, so that we may obey the gospel, not by constraint but willingly. It is waging eternal war against every sin.

The gospel is designed and every way calculated to make men more amiable, more virtuous, and more happy. The sincere penitent believes this, and acts accordingly. He seeks to do good, and to imitate the benevolent example of his blessed Master. He strives to be conformed to the divine law, and to maintain a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men. He gives diligence to make his calling and election sure; looks continually to God for all needed supplies of grace and strength, and is stimulated by every victory and by

every defeat to new exertions and greater vigilance. He steadily aims at perfection; though he well knows that he cannot attain to it in this life. This consideration however does not damp his ardor, or relax his vigorous endeavours after an honest compliance with the whole will of God. He is consistent and uniform in his conduct, because he always acts from principle. Not like those who hear the word, and attend to some external duties, while they indulge in many practices condemned in Scripture. Not like the multitudes of reputed penitents in whom we behold a continued kind of contest between the power of sin and of conscience. Who commit sin, are sorry for it, and then commit it again: and in this fluctuating state spend their days, the victims of self-deceptions and of overweening confidence in their own virtuous purposes and resolutions.

There is a great deal of this sort of penitence in the world. But instead of reforming the vicious, it does but harden and encourage them in sin. Such men proceed on the plan, it would seem, of balancing accounts with their Maker, by occasional or periodical settlements. That is to say: after a season of sinning, they will confess their faults, pray for pardon, perform some painful duty, do a liberal act, bestow something on the church or on the poor, and then conclude that the debt is cancelled, that the past is obliterated, and a virtual license or indulgence procured for recurring again to former courses. In this manner thousands pass through life without enjoying either the pleasures of sin or the consolations of religion. They never taste and see that

the Lord is good; never learn that his service is reasonable and delightful; but constantly dread him as a hard master on whom their future destiny unfortunately depends.

But, brethren, Christ has no concord with Belial. His kingdom is not of this world. No man can serve two masters of opposite characters and independent conflicting interests. No man can indulge his carnal views and propensities, and, at the same time, relish the purity of those heavenly precepts which reach to the very thoughts and purposes of the heart. No man can love God, and yet love what God has condemned. No man can follow Christ while he cherishes the very sins which nailed him to the cross. None can worship in sincerity the living God, and at the same time offer incense to idols. There is no affinity, no resemblance between light and darkness, truth and falsehood, sin and holiness, heaven and hell. They cannot be confounded. They can never harmonize. The man therefore who is thus halting between two opinions, who is thus wavering from the one to the other, who is now apparently on the Lord's side and then on Satan's, who takes one step to the right and another to the left, as if doubtful which course to pursue, does abundantly manifest that he has never beheld the awful deformity and evil of sin as a transgression of God's holy law, and consequently cannot have experienced hearty sorrow for it.

Lest the purport of these remarks should in any manner be misunderstood, allow me to add, that it is far from my intention to intimate that the real penitent

will never fall into sin. The experience of every good man in every age furnishes ample and mournful evidence of his liability to error and of the occasional power of temptation to seduce him from the path of duty and virtue. But he does not allow of the deliberate habitual indulgence of any known sin. He may be ensnared, he may inadvertently stumble, he may rashly presume to venture beyond his strength, he may relax his vigilance, become languid and cold, and for a season be left to learn more of his own weakness and corruption by wandering far from the presence of the good Shepherd in the dark paths of the destroyer. But the heavenly seed still remaineth in him. He will be brought back to the fold more penitent and humble than ever. The floodgates of sorrow will be opened afresh; and the piercing but kind forgiving look of his Saviour will enter deep into his very soul and awaken the keenest pangs of remorse and penitential sorrow, while it inspires hope and confidence. (It was thus he looked on Peter.) His backslidings will be healed. The good work which the Holy Spirit has begun in him, he will carry on till he be made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light and glory.

Thus, brethren, have we endeavoured, in the plainest manner, to point out to you some of the evidences and essential characteristics of genuine repentance. We have, as we could, explained the duty. We proceed to enforce it.

II. The gospel which we preach is worthy of all acceptation. Every son and daughter of Adam is most deeply interested in it. All have sinned, and therefore

all need repentance. "Repent ye and believe the gospel," was the exhortation and the command of the Saviour to those who first attended on his public ministry. And he commissioned his apostles and all those who should afterwards minister in his name, to carry the same message even to the ends of the earth. This message can never be unseasonable to any who are living at enmity with God and in rebellion against him; however often they may have heard and rejected it. As ambassadors from God to a guilty, disobedient world, as a ministry of reconciliation, we are not at liberty to propose to you any terms which do not imply an unequivocal surrender of yourselves at discretion into the hands of your Sovereign, and an entire acquiescence in his will—a readiness to accept of proffered pardon through Jesus Christ the Mediator, and an unfeigned desire and full purpose to conduct as dutiful subjects for the future. All this is included in repentance.

1st. Repentance is a perfectly reasonable duty. If any have done wrong, is it not natural that they should be sorry for it? and reasonable that they should do so no more? Has a child disobeyed the equitable commands of his father? and is it not reasonable that he should acknowledge his fault and return to his duty? Does one man offend or injure another: what can he do better or more truly honourable, than to make him all the reparation in his power? and to manifest by his daily deportment and conversation his deep regret for the past, and his determination to be more circumspect and decorous in future? Does a man treat with ingrati-

tude his best friend and benefactor, and forget the obligations which benevolence and kindness had imposed? Does he render evil for good? With what sentiments of remorse and shame, does not reason say, he ought to be overwhelmed, till he has wiped off the foul stain from his character by exhibiting the surest tokens of penitence, and more generous feelings and principles? Is not this the language even of human reason and of worldly honour?

Does a creature who is dependent on God for existence, who has no absolute control over any one circumstance which can contribute to his happiness or misery, who is a debtor to infinite goodness, to free grace and sovereign mercy for every enjoyment and blessing, for all the varied bounty of providence, for all the rich provision and precious hopes of the gospel: does such a creature forget his heavenly Benefactor, the Father of his spirit and the Former of his body, the Giver of every good and perfect gift, who is constantly loading him with benefits and following him with kindness? Does he regard the Author of all these blessings and mercies with indifference? Does he make light of his name, his attributes, his laws, his kingdom and government, his gospel, threatenings and promises? What shall we say of such a person? Is he not a wretch, a monster? Will it be pretended that he ought not to repent? Rather can it be hoped that any opportunity of repentance will be afforded him? Where in the midst of this respectable Christian assembly can we find so hardened and unworthy a character as we are now con-

templating—a character which would be branded with indelible infamy, where it predicated of a similar course of conduct towards a distinguished fellow-mortal? Behold, fellow-sinner, my brother in transgression, thou art the man! Yes, every one of us sustains this odious, degrading character as children of a heavenly Father, as subjects of a heavenly King! And the wonder is that we have not long ago been crushed beneath the weight of his righteous indignation. Still more wonderful is it that pardon should be offered and reconciliation made practicable; and not only so, but tenderly urged upon us by the Judge himself, who has paid to law and justice that debt and sacrifice and penalty which would have required an eternity for us to have satisfied in our own persons. Is it not most reasonable then that we should repent? What can be more reasonable?

2d. Repentance is necessary. It is absolutely essential to our peace and happiness both here and hereafter. No man can be at ease and satisfied with himself who knows that he is daily committing sin. Conscience will not suffer him to repose quietly and sweetly in the midst of guilt and folly and rebellion. A guilty conscience or a wounded spirit, who can bear? Where is the man whose conscience testifies that he has perpetrated a base or criminal deed, (though unknown to all the world,) who can feel that inward peace and serenity which lie at the foundation of all true enjoyment? But even though we may not be chargeable with any enormous crime or disgraceful action, though we may appear very amiable and even meritorious in the eyes of others,

though conscience may not be particularly troublesome, yet such is the constitution of our nature and such the economy of the divine government, that it is utterly impossible to enjoy any portion of true happiness, even in this world, while we continue in our natural state of sin and hostility against our Maker. Did this position need proof, proof enough is at hand. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked. God is angry with the wicked every day. And who can be happy under the frown of the Almighty? The enemies of God talk much of happiness, and speculate much about it, and imagine it within their grasp; but their continued search for it, their earnest inquiries after it, their unwearied efforts to obtain it, prove that they know nothing of the matter.

The experiment has hitherto been vainly made, and is now making in vain, by every description of persons and in all conceivable ways. No expedient has been left untried. From the prince to the beggar, from the philosopher to the peasant, all have contributed their mite towards ascertaining wherein lies the chief good. At least, all have essayed to do this. All have exercised their genius and their resources to effect this desirable object. But they have exhausted their wit and their labour in vain. Repentance therefore is necessary. Happiness must be sought in a totally different sphere and manner from what the natural man ever thinks of. It is not in the creature to bestow what the soul demands. The Father of our spirits alone can say to the restless, troubled, unsatisfied spirit: Peace, be still. I am thy portion. In me is fulness of joy. This is the

grand secret of human happiness. "The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him: but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him." (Ezra, viii. 22.) Repent, therefore, my friends, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out. (Acts, iii. 19.)

It is not a hard task that you are required to perform. It is bidding adieu to wretchedness and sin. It is being willing to be washed from your guilt and pollution in that precious blood of the Lamb which was shed for the remission of sins. It is not a degrading, nor a slavish, nor an onerous work. Whatever of the disagreeable or the painful may be supposed to attach to repentance or to be mingled with it, ought to be referred, not to repentance strictly, but to sin, which renders repentance necessary as the only way of escaping from the guilt and the evil of sin. Without repentance therefore, the cause of misery remains in all its force, undiminished and unmitigated. I repeat, then, that repentance is both a reasonable and a pleasant duty. Every true penitent has found it so. He is never happier than when he is sensible of his increasing hatred against sin, and of his triumphing over it, than when he is laid low in the dust under a view of his past follies and his natural depravity. It is then he gives way to that ingenuous sorrow, which to a mind conscious of having opposed the best of beings—a Being to whom he is now bound by cords of the tenderest love—must be grateful. It is an evidence that his heart is not as it once was. The oldest Christian must daily experience something of this. And the more of it the

better. It manifests a temper, a state of mind more congenial to real enjoyment than any other which can be possessed—let men say or think what they will on the subject.

The Son of God suffering on the cross is the most awful and glorious exhibition of justice and mercy that ever has been made; probably, that could be made, to the universe. It is the most abundant and lasting source of sorrow and of joy to the believing penitent. It is here, and here only, that he is able to form some adequate idea of the nature of sin. And it is here, and here only, that he finds relief from its direful and damning influence. Can he look on the Saviour whom his sins have pierced and slain, and to whom he is under unspeakable obligations, without one tear of penitential gratitude? Can the tears of penitence cease to flow whenever he contemplates this stupendous, this amazing display of divine love and holiness? No, impossible. It furnishes the richest, purest feast to the saint. It is while humbled, abased, self-convicted, at the foot of the cross, that he gets near to heaven, and enjoys a foretaste of its blessedness. To the real disciple of Jesus, all this will be plain. It is his daily experience. Brethren, did you ever see the good man weep on account of his sins against God, his Redeemer? It is the "joy of grief" he feels. A joy which he would not barter for the wealth of worlds. A joy which he will know in heaven.

Let no man therefore, who can have no knowledge on the subject, affirm that repentance, which implies a renunciation of every evil propensity and practice, is a

gloomy, debasing service. Rather let him concede, what he cannot fail to know from bitter experience, that the service of sin is gloomy and debasing. That this is a servitude at once dishonourable and ruinous to soul and body; from which he derives no comfort in life, and from which he expects no support in death.

3d. As repentance is both reasonable and necessary; so, in the third place, have we the greatest encouragement to perform the duty.

"Repent, and turn ye from all your transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your ruin." (Ezek. xviii. 30.)

"As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked: but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways, for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" (Ezek. xxxiii. 11.)

"Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way: and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." (Isa. lv. 6.)

But who are the wicked thus encouraged and admonished to repent? Are they the thief, the drunkard, the Sabbath-breaker, the profane swearer, the libertine, the atheist? All the world agree that such abandoned sinners ought to repent. No, my friends, not merely these.

Our Lord, when about to leave the earth, commanded his disciples, saying: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth

and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark, xvi. 15.) He that believeth not in Christ, as the true Messiah, and the only Saviour of men, is condemned already. Here the line is drawn. Unbelievers are the wicked who are invited and summoned to repentance. Unbelief is a most grievous sin in a land of gospel light and gospel privileges. It implies a radical and most obstinate hostility to the authority and government of Jehovah. Unbelievers are numbered in Scripture among the vilest transgressors: and it is declared of them that they "shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death." (Rev. xxi. 8.)

How many of us are guilty of this heinous sin? How many of us are daily crucifying afresh the Lord of glory and putting him to an open shame, by rejecting his mercy and the precious benefits of his costly purchase? We may be moral and regular and just in our conduct and dealings, so far as the world can judge. But what then? Is God in all our thoughts? Have we a sacred regard to his will in all our purposes, plans and actions? If not, wherein consists our obedience? What shall we say of that child who never consults his father's pleasure in anything; even though his general deportment may appear exemplary and praiseworthy? Or of that subject, who, however prudently and skilfully he may manage his own concerns, yet is utterly regardless of the will and the laws of his sovereign? Would you not denounce both as undutiful, disloyal and rebellious? Now what God demands of us, and it is surely a reasonable and

equitable demand, is, that in all things, and at all times, we conduct as dutiful, affectionate children—as obedient, faithful servants — as being ever in his presence, dependent on his bounty, and accountable to him for the improvement of all our talents and faculties—as debtors to his grace through Jesus Christ for the pardon of our sins and the justification of our persons. This it is, to be religious. There is no mystery in this: no absurdity in it: nothing burdensome in it: nothing enthusiastic or fanatical or humiliating. It is to live, so far as our imperfections will permit us, as angels would live, were they on the earth. It is to use the world, and to enjoy the world, so as not to abuse it or be injured by it. It is to fulfil all our duties, public and private, individual, relative and social, in that way, which, while it honours God, is most conducive to our own and our neighbour's happiness, both here and hereafter.

It does not consist any more in praying, and weeping and fasting, than it does in the active employments of life. Its grand principle is love,—love to God and love to man — a love that excites us to be diligent in doing good, as God shall enable us—a love that prompts us to view all mankind as the proper objects of our benevolence, so far as we have opportunity of manifesting it towards them — a love that makes us ever ready to do an act of kindness to friend or foe. And this representation is abundantly confirmed by the general spirit and by express declarations of Scripture. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doeth the will of my

Father which is in heaven." (Matt. vii. 21.) To be religious, then, is to be habitually devoted to God; as much so in all the variety of busy life, as in the retirement of the closet. It is going on our pilgrimage under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and humbly trusting in the Lord Jesus as our strength and our righteousness. Such a religion, if rightly understood and duly appreciated, presents to the wretched wandering sinner every encouragement and every allurement to win his assent and engage his affections.

The whole Bible, indeed, is one continued strain of expostulation with sinners, of calls and invitations to sinners, of arguments addressed to their understandings, of appeals to their consciences, to their hopes and their fears, of every kind of exhibition and representation calculated to affect the heart and to reclaim the prodigal. Infinite wisdom and infinite compassion could do no more to encourage and constrain men to repent and be happy than has been done. Repent, therefore, that you may live the life of the righteous: for you all doubtless wish to die his death.

4. But, lastly. We are informed that if the wicked turn not, God will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready. (Ps. vii. 12.) We read of a people of whom it is said, after many warnings and reproofs, that "no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? Every one turneth to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle." "I will surely consume them, saith the Lord." (Jer. viii. 6, 13.)

Thus it was is in the days of Noah. He was a

preacher of righteousness and of repentance in the midst of a perverse and wicked generation, probably for centuries; but to no purpose. His contemporaries continued deaf and insensible. They did not believe a word that he told them of impending vengeance: till suddenly the floods came and swept them away as with the besom of destruction.

The inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah were admonished by Lot, but he seemed as one that mocked unto them. They laughed at his rebukes, scorned his friendly counsel, and perished in their sins.

The Jewish history is a continued series of rebellion, followed by chastisement; of merciful calls to repentance, of wanton neglect of those calls, and of terrible judgments experienced in consequence of that neglect. Nothing can surpass the tenderness with which our Saviour besought his thoughtless countrymen to avoid, by seasonable repentance, the bitter cup of misery which was preparing for them, and which they finally drank to the very dregs. "And when he was come near (to Jerusalem) he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes." (Luke, xix. 41.) And hid, indeed, they were: but most awfully revealed within a few years after, when scarce a vestige of that once magnificent city was suffered, by a victorious and exterminating foe, to remain as a memento of former greatness.

But temporal calamities are not the only or the principal evils which sinners have to dread. Individuals are

never punished in this life according to their deserts, though nations and cities and political communities generally are. It is here only that they can be punished as nations and civil communities. This however is a small matter, comparatively, to any guilty sinner. He may escape in this life altogether. He may live in the midst of the pious, and hence be shielded from those dreadful sufferings with which the wicked are sometimes visited. The righteousness of a Lot may, for a time, protect him even in Sodom. The faith and prayers of a Paul may preserve him from the fury of the tempest and the waves in the midst of shipwreck and ruin. Or should he suffer all reverses, and the most excruciating tortures that humanity can be made to endure, still, if limited to this passing scene, it would be an affair of trivial moment. Natural fortitude, stoic philosophy, pride, ambition, bold unblushing wickedness might dispose him to brave the worst, and to despise, or affect to despise, the miseries of a day or an hour however intense and exquisite.

But here is the bitterness of sin. Here the ingredient in that misery which sin occasions, that imparts to it all its sting and all its terror. It is ETERNITY. Eternity implies everything that is dreadful and appalling to the sinner. No hardihood, natural or acquired, no philosophy or sophistry can arm the soul against the terrors of eternity. God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness: when he will give to every man according to his wages, and according to the fruit of his doings. (Jer. xvii. 10.) Few men pretend

to doubt this. All mean to prepare for it. So universal is the consciousness of guilt, the dread of future punishment, and the conviction that something must be done in order to fit them for the unseen world, that scarcely any man is so senseless and abandoned as not to calculate on preparing himself at some time or other for death and judgment.

Death has ever been and ever will be a terrible messenger to sinners. When viewed at a distance, he is dreaded: and the Christless soul shudders at the prospect of his near approach. But he comes frequently like a thief in the night—steals softly on, and grasps his prey without giving a moment's previous warning. The house of feasting and merriment is sometimes instantaneously converted into a house of mourning and of death. Instances daily occur of men's being hurried into eternity when they least expected it, and while participating pleasures and engaged in pursuits which but poorly qualify the soul for judgment. No man can assure himself that this will not be his lot. Neither age, nor rank, nor sex is spared by the great destroyer. When he demands his victim, no resistance will be availing. Go he must, prepared or unprepared. This is a solemn thought, brethren; and there is no way to evade its force, however successful we may be in banishing it for a season from the mind. Fatally successful indeed most of us are, but not sufficiently so to prevent its frequent return and its disturbing influence. That death must come, sooner or later, and that he may come at any moment, and that as our character at death is, so it will

remain forever, are considerations of the highest possible moment to us all. Let us heed them while we may.

God *now* commands all men everywhere to repent. *To-day* if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts—not to-morrow, or next year. No uncertain future period will do. A death-bed will not do. Let me caution you against trusting to a death-bed repentance. Many are calculating on this. It is a subtle artifice of the enemy. He fain would lull you into a fatal security by insinuating that the last sad hour of life will be sufficient to make up your peace with God. It is a deceitful hope, and such you will find it. Far be it from me to limit the power and grace of God in saving sinners. I do not say that he cannot save them at any time according to his sovereign will and pleasure. But I do most distinctly and solemnly assert that a death-bed is not the place where sinners often meet with a Saviour. They have no ground to presume that they ever will.

The trembling dying sinner is easily deluded at that awful crisis. He is naturally alarmed with the prospect of immediate damnation. But he may have no just sense of the evil of sin. He is ready to seize on any shadow of hope which his own disordered imagination, or which sympathizing friends may furnish him. And friends often act most unkindly on such occasions, when they mean to pour the balm of consolation into the wounded heart of the wretched sufferer. They encourage and flatter him that his penitence will be accepted, and that all will be well. While he may neither love holiness, nor hate sin, as such, any more than he for-

merly did. And should he be restored to health, it is a thousand to one, but he will return to his old courses and habits with as much avidity and more boldness than ever.

This representation is not exaggerated. It is daily confirmed by facts, which prove that such a repentance could not have been genuine or beneficial. And the nature of the case is such as almost necessarily to preclude the slightest hope that it ever will.

Since men love to speculate on subjects of religion, and to bring its mysteries and its principles to the test of reason: let me ask here, is it reasonable to suppose that God will interpose to rescue obstinate despisers of his grace from hell at the very moment when they are about to sink into it, after having devoted all their days and all their talents to the service of sin? Let it be remembered that men must be holy before they can be fit for heaven; and that sanctification is a progressive work. And can it be presumed that God will impart to them in an instant a perfect heart, a thorough conformity to his own righteous law and character, an angelic relish for heaven and truth and purity? The thief on the cross, who believed and was pardoned, is not an instance in point. We have no evidence that he had ever been warned, or that a Saviour had ever been tendered to him before. Under any view of the matter, his is a solitary case; and can never be pleaded as a precedent by those to whom the gospel has been preached from year to year, who have received line upon line and precept upon precept, as is the case with most, if not all

of my present hearers. Awful then must be your doom, if you continue to neglect so great salvation. Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish — perish, soul and body, with an everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power!

The archangel is about to swear by Him that liveth forever and ever, that there shall be time no longer. (Rev. x. 6.) "Let him that is unjust be unjust still: and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still." (Rev. xxii. 1.)

May God, for Christ's sake, grant us all that godly sorrow which worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of! (2 Cor. vii. 10.)

AMEN!

MINISTERS OF CHRIST,

AS STEWARDS OF THE MYSTERIES OF GOD,

REQUIRED TO BE FAITHFUL.

MINISTERS OF CHRIST, AS STEWARDS OF THE MYSTERIES OF GOD, REQUIRED TO BE FAITHFUL.

[AN ORDINATION SERMON.]

Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.

Moreover, it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.—1 *Corinthians*, iv. 1, 2.

Paul was chosen of God, and commissioned to preach the gospel to those who were devoted to idolatry, and perishing in sin. He resided nearly two years at Corinth, which was then the metropolis of Achaia, and distinguished for science and the arts. He there preached the gospel with success, and gathered a very flourishing church. When he wrote his first epistle to that church, he had been absent from them about four years. In the course of that period false teachers had arisen, who corrupted the gospel for the sake of rendering it more acceptable to the philosophizing Greeks. That they might spread their errors with success, and answer the purposes of their ambition, they represented Paul as one who had not the intellectual powers, nor personal dignity, nor gifts of eloquence, which were necessary for an apostle. To vindicate himself from the calumnies of these false teachers, and to induce them, and those who were under their influence, to receive the doctrines he

had taught, as of divine authority, was one design of Paul in this epistle. As the aversion of the Greeks to the doctrines of the gospel arose in part from their attachment to their own false philosophy, he shows that those high notions of the powers of the human mind, which pretenders to philosophy industriously circulate for the purpose of persuading men that reason is a sufficient guide, and that a revelation from God is not necessary, are wrong and dangerous.

Lest what he had said concerning the inspiration of himself and of the other apostles, should induce some to think that he claimed for himself and brethren an authority not derived from Christ, he says, "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." His desire was, that he and his fellow-labourers in the gospel should be considered only as servants of Christ, and stewards appointed by him to dispense with fidelity the mysteries of God. All who are called to preach the gospel sustain a similar relation to Christ, and are under similar obligations. Hence the doctrine inculcated by the text is this, —*The ministers of Christ, as stewards of the mysteries of God, are required to be faithful.*

To elucidate this general truth, I shall show—

I. What we are to understand by the mysteries of God, of which the ministers of Christ are stewards.

II. What is implied in their being faithful as stewards of these mysteries. And

III. Why they should be faithful.

I. What are we to understand by the *mysteries of God?*

The term *mystery*, in its original meaning, denotes a *secret*, or a *thing concealed*. It is derived through the Greek from a Hebrew verb, which signifies to *cover* or *conceal one with a veil*. The noun from this verb denotes anything concealed from the eye by a veil or otherwise, and also a place of concealment. Like all other primitive words, it has respect to the powers and objects of external perception. As few words are so transferred as to lose wholly their radical meaning, so in the metaphorical uses of this, we may expect to find something of its radical or primitive meaning. The transition from this to its use to denote anything, which the mind cannot comprehend, and which human reason cannot investigate, is easy and natural.

Its meaning, as used in the sacred Scriptures, is to be ascertained by an examination of those passages in their connexion, in which the term occurs. An examination of a few of these will lead us to a correct knowledge of its meaning in the text. To his disciples, on a certain occasion, Christ said, "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God." (Luke, viii. 10.) By the *kingdom of God*, is here meant the gospel dispensation, or the mediatorial scheme of redemption; and by *mysteries*, the truths relating to this scheme, which Christ made known to his disciples, and which he directed them to preach to all the world. In the first chapter of his epistle to the Ephesians, Paul writes, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath

blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:"—"Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; Having made known unto us the *mystery* of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:" (Verses 3, 8, 9, 10.) The gospel, or mediatorial scheme of redemption, comprising all its doctrines, and all its influences upon believers, and upon God's moral kingdom, is here represented as having originated in the benevolence of God, and is called *the mystery of his will.* This from eternity was a secret in the Divine mind, till it was revealed, and clearly exhibited by the advent, instruction, and sufferings of the Saviour. "Having made *known* unto us the *mystery* of his will." In the third chapter of this epistle, Paul speaks of himself, as appointed "to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the *mystery,* which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God." (Verses 8, 9, 10.) In this, as in the preceding passage, the gospel scheme of redemption, especially as it relates to the Gentiles, is represented as a *mystery,* as having been a secret in the Divine mind, but as now *made known* and *published* to the world.

In the second chapter of the epistle containing the

text, the apostle says, "We speak the wisdom of God in a *mystery*, even the hidden wisdom (*mystery*) which God ordained before the world unto our glory." (Verse 7.) The truths and doctrines comprised in the mediatorial scheme of redemption and instruction, are here called the wisdom of God. They are called a *hidden* wisdom, because they could not be known by man otherwise than by a revelation from God; and because, previous to the incarnation of Christ, they were represented by types, and in the symbolical language of prophecy. After Christ appeared and completed the work of atonement, they were clearly made known. In the first chapter of his epistle to the Colossians, Paul writes, "Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; Even the *mystery* which hath been hid from ages, and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints." (Verses 25, 26.) The verses following show, that the term *mystery* here comprises in its meaning the truths of revelation, and especially all those truths which have respect to salvation by Christ as Mediator. "Now to him that is of power to establish you (says Paul, in the last chapter of his epistle to the Romans,) according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the *mystery*, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is *made manifest*, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, *made known* to all nations for the obedience of faith." (Rom. xvi. 25, 26.) In this passage the word *mystery* is evidently used to denote

the *Christian religion*, or all the truths of revelation. In the third chapter of the first epistle to Timothy it is written, "Great is the *mystery of godliness:* God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." (1 Tim. iii. 16.) The *mystery of godliness*, it is here asserted, consists in the incarnation of Christ, and several other facts which relate to him as Mediator. "God was manifest in the flesh." This is precisely the same fact which the Evangelist John states, when he says, chap. i. verse 14, "The Word (who is called God, verse 1) was made flesh, and dwelt among us." To conceive the facts here stated, as being comprised in the *mystery of godliness*, would never have entered into the heart of man, had not God made them known, and established their truth by incontestable evidence.

The term *mystery* is sometimes used in the writings of Paul in a sense less extensive than in the passages which have now been examined. It is used to denote a particular fact; as the extending of the blessings of the gospel to the Gentiles; the rejection of the Jews for a time, and their future conversion and restoration; the change which will take place in the bodies of believers, who will be alive on the earth at the time of the general resurrection; and the spiritual union of Christ to the Church. (Rom. xi. 25, 26; 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52; Eph. v. 32.) But, in all these instances, it denotes a truth or fact, which relates to the kingdom of Christ, and which is known only by revelation.

Thus it appears, that the word *mystery*, in the sacred Scriptures, does not mean what is now *unknown* and absolutely *unintelligible*, but something *revealed*, and *published*, and which may be *understood*. When in the text the apostles are called "stewards of the mysteries of God," these mysteries cannot mean things that were *unknown* to them, because to them it was given to *know* the mysteries of the kingdom of God, and they were required to *make them known* to others. *The mysteries of God*, of which the ministers of Christ are stewards, *are the sublime truths of the gospel, the truths which are comprised in the sacred Scriptures, and are distinctively called the doctrines of revelation.* They are especially those truths or doctrines which distinguish the religion of the Bible from all other religions; and that is thus distinguished by a system of truths, which centre in Christ as God manifest in the flesh, and the Saviour of sinners.

There are two reasons why these truths are called mysteries. One is, they could be known only by a revelation from God. "I certify you, brethren, (says the apostle to the Galatians,) that the gospel, which was preached of me, is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." (Ch. i. 11, 12.) The scheme of redemption and reconciliation through a Mediator is wholly beyond the power of human research. The reason of man, ever so much improved, could have made no approximation towards a discovery of this scheme, because there are no data within the reach of human

reason from which it could be inferred. The works of God, beautiful and sublime as they are, and clearly as they exhibit the power, the wisdom, and the goodness of God, exhibit no evidence of redeeming love. They point out no way, in which rebels against the King of Heaven can be restored to his forfeited favour and made forever blessed. For those who have never transgressed the holy law of God, the religion of nature may be sufficient. They do not need a Mediator. They can approach God as their Father and their Friend. But it is not so with those who have revolted from God. To them the religion of nature can be of no avail. No religion can present to them any ground of hope, but that which is revealed, and adapted to their guilty, perishing condition. Such a religion was among the eternal counsels of God: such is the religion of the Bible. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "I am not come to call the *righteous*, but *sinners* to repentance." The religion of the Bible is the religion which God devised and revealed to men as the revolted subjects of His government, and involved in all the guilt of rebellion. By that wisdom, which cannot err, it is adapted to their condition. It presents a plan for their recovery.

The doctrine of the Trinity, which has respect to the manner of the Divine existence, and which holds a pre-eminent place in the scheme of revealed religion; the incarnation of Him, who is the brightness of the Father's glory, and "the express image of his person," (Heb. i. 3;)

atonement by HIS sufferings; the renovating influences of the Holy Spirit; the restoration to holiness and happiness of all who believe in the name of Jesus; and the whole scheme of redemption and salvation by a Mediator, and its future and endless influence in augmenting the happiness of the intelligent universe, were secrets in the Divine mind, and wholly inscrutable by any creature, till revealed by the Spirit of God. It is hence easy to see the propriety, according to the primitive meaning of the word mystery, of calling the truths of revelation *mysteries*, and the *mysteries of God*.

Another reason, why they are called mysteries, is, that they are known, many of them at least, only *as facts*, and relate to things the nature of which is incomprehensible by the human mind. All the truths of revealed religion are known and intelligible as *facts*, but many of them relate to things, to which the term mystery, as denoting what is incomprehensible by the human mind, may be applied. We are to make a distinction between what *is revealed* and what is *not* revealed in the doctrines of the sacred Scriptures. What is revealed is no longer a secret, but is manifest and known. The fact or truth that is revealed, we have no difficulty in understanding *as a fact* or *truth*, because there is decisive evidence of it. The only way in which we know any fact or truth, is on the ground of proper evidence. We can have no higher evidence than the testimony of God. But the nature of the thing to which that testimony relates, the nature of the thing declared, or of which the fact is predicated, and the manner of the fact, may be wholly incomprehensible.

This distinction I will illustrate by a few instances. *God created the visible universe.* This is a truth or fact of which there is the fullest evidence, and *as a fact* it is perfectly intelligible, and easy to be understood. But the *manner* in which God so operated as to cause the visible universe to exist, where nothing before existed, is not revealed; it is to us a secret. *God will raise the dead, and these corruptible bodies will be so changed as to be no more subject to decay.* This is revealed as what God by his power will effect. But *how* he will do this is not revealed. As *a fact* the future resurrection of the body is perfectly intelligible; the *manner* in which it will be raised, is not revealed; it is a secret, and wholly incomprehensible. *The mode of divine existence is such as to lay a foundation for a distinction into three.* That the Father is God; that the Son is God; and that the Holy Ghost is God; and that these three are one God, is a revealed fact. The *fact* we understand. But the *nature of uncaused existence, the nature of the Infinite Mind,* we do not understand. The incomprehensibleness of the doctrine of the Trinity lies in the *nature* of the thing declared, for it relates to the *manner* of the divine existence, and not in the *fact* declared. The fact is intelligible on the same ground that any other fact is intelligible. It is intelligible on the same ground that the eternity, self-existence, omniscience, and omnipresence of God are intelligible, that is, on the ground of clear and decisive evidence. God knows the manner of his own existence, and what he has revealed with respect to it we know *as a fact,* and no further. *Christ is God, and*

became incarnate. This, as a matter of fact, is perfectly intelligible. But *how* the human nature and the divine nature were united in the person of Christ, we do not know. This is not revealed. *We shall exist in a social state immediately after death.* There is no difficulty in understanding this as *a matter of fact.* But *how* minds can hold intercourse with each other without material organs, we know not. This is not revealed. Thus as respects the *nature* of the things to which they relate, the doctrines of revelation may be called *mysteries,* according to the common acceptation of the term, as denoting that which is difficult to be conceived, or which is wholly incomprehensible.

I would here remark, that there is a very striking analogy between the truths of revelation and the truths which relate to the visible universe. All the sciences, which relate to matter, rest on facts, of which we can give no explanation, and of which we can give no account, but that such is the will of the Creator;—facts, of which we have the fullest evidence, and to deny which would indicate insanity; but of which we can give no explanation, and can only refer them to the mysterious and incomprehensible agency of Him, who worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will. Of this no one will for a moment doubt, who will attempt an explanation of the familiar and universal fact denoted by the term *gravitation.* This term, when used to denote *a fact,* or the tendency of one body towards another, we perfectly understand; but when used to denote the *cause* of that tendency, who can explain

its meaning, or give any account of the thing which it denotes, otherwise than by resolving it into the invisible and incomprehensible agency of God? So the term *magnetism*, when used to denote *a fact*, we understand; but when used to denote the *cause* of that fact, we can only say, that it denotes an invisible agency, which we do not comprehend. So all the terms used to denote the changes which take place in the material world, are intelligible as denoting *matters of fact*, because of these facts we have the most satisfactory evidence. But, when they are used to denote the *cause* of these changes, we do not comprehend the thing denoted. It is the invisible and mysterious agency of God.

"There is not an object in existence, which does not present mysteries, that mock all our efforts at explanation." In pursuing any subject that comes within the sphere of our knowledge, beyond certain limits, we find ourselves involved in mystery, and that we have arrived at the utmost verge of our intellectual powers. Even mathematical science, which is justly deemed an impregnable fortress of human reason, has its mysteries. The demonstrations of the infinite divisibility of quantity, the doctrines of endless approximations, and of infinitessimals, involve us in mysteries as far above the comprehension of the human mind as the illimitable nature of space.

"There is a certain character or style in all the works and operations of Infinite Wisdom," which, in all their endless variety, marks them as His. Thus marked is the system of revealed truths, contained in the sacred

Scriptures. These are easy to be understood as *matters of fact;* but they relate to things, the *nature* of which is concealed by an impenetrable veil. This is also true of the different systems of truths, comprised in all the various sciences, which relate to the different departments of the visible universe.

Having thus explained what we are to understand by the mysteries of God, of which the ministers of Christ are stewards, I proceed to show,—

II. What is implied in their being *faithful* as the stewards of these mysteries.

The word steward originally denotes an officer in great families, who is intrusted by the master of the family with the management of the affairs of the household. The church is Christ's family, the affairs of which are intrusted to those who are his ministers. To them is intrusted the dispensation of the seals of the covenant of grace, together with the superintendence and discipline of the church. They are especially intrusted with the mysteries of God. Their great business is to preach the gospel; to exhibit, illustrate, and enforce the doctrines of revelation. To be faithful in this implies—

1. That they have a cordial attachment to the interests of Christ's kingdom, and that they cordially approve of the peculiar doctrines of revelation. A servant that feels no attachment to the cause and interest of his master, but serves him from motives of mere selfishness, will not be faithful. In vain would it be to expect, that one who does not from the heart approve of the peculiar

doctrines of revelation, will be faithful in dispensing them to others. The first thing, therefore, requisite in a steward of the mysteries of God, is a cordial attachment to the interests of his kingdom. This involves a love of the truth as it is in Jesus, and all those moral feelings which they possess who have been born of the Spirit of God. This attachment Paul felt after his memorable conversion, when on his way from Jerusalem to Damascus. Under the influence of this he always acted, when dispensing the truths of the gospel.

2. To be faithful as stewards of the mysteries of God, the ministers of Christ must have an intimate and extensive knowledge of these mysteries. To be faithful as an instructor in any science, one must understand the truths of that science. It is not enough to understand a few of them. One may have a knowledge of a few propositions in Euclid, and yet be profoundly ignorant of geometry, and wholly unqualified to instruct in that science. So one may possess a knowledge of a few of the truths of revelation, and yet be profoundly ignorant of the system of truths which revelation comprises, and wholly unqualified to give instruction to others. The religion of the Bible comprises a system of truths. The work of redemption is a connected systematic work. In this respect it agrees with all the other works of God. In the midst of all the variety, in the different parts of the visible universe, there is order. This lays a foundation for the natural sciences, each of which comprises a system of truths. In every science there are first principles, on which others depend, and a knowledge of which is

necessary in order to a knowledge of the science. This is true in the system of revealed truth. To have that intimate and extensive knowledge which will qualify one for faithfulness, as a steward of the mysteries of God, he must understand the first principles of revealed religion, and have a clear and connected view of the relation of other truths to these, and of the connexion of the infinitely interesting truths comprised in the gospel. The very nature of his employment requires this.

3. The ministers of Christ, to be faithful as the stewards of the mysteries of God, must exhibit these mysteries in their purity, and illustrate them in all their just extent. This is emphatically the object of their stewardship. It is for this very purpose, that they are intrusted with these mysteries, that they should thus dispense them to others.

I cannot better illustrate what is implied in being faithful in this respect, than by the example of Paul. He represented the scheme of redemption as God's scheme, and as having been devised and adjusted in all its parts before the foundation of the world. The truth respecting Christ as Mediator, he exhibited with great clearness. He spake of him as God manifested in the flesh, and did not hesitate to say, "By him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible; whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him, and for him, and he is before all things, and by him all things consist." (Colos. i. 16, 17.) The doctrine of Christ's divinity is one of the most prominent doc-

trines in the writings of Paul. To him he ascribes the works of creation and providence, and all those perfections which distinguish the Creator from the creature. In reading the epistles of this eminent steward of the mysteries of God, we cannot but be deeply impressed with a belief of the fact that he felt as if he could never say too much in exalting Christ, and that he had not a remaining doubt with respect to his divinity, and the union of the human and the divine nature in his person as Mediator. He exhibited and illustrated the great and interesting truths which relate to the character of God as the holy and blessed Sovereign of the Universe. He illustrated the truth with respect to the nature and extent of the divine law, and its perpetuity as the standard of duty and obligation to man, and to all rational beings within the kingdom of God. He represented man as being, in his fallen state, not partially, but wholly depraved, as dead in trespasses and sins, and under sentence of everlasting condemnation. He explained the design of Christ's mission to this fallen world, and the way and manner in which he has procured salvation. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." (Gal. iii. 13.) "Now in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." He explained the nature, extent, and sufficiency of the atonement, and the power and willingness of Christ to save all who cordially embrace him as the Lord their righteousness. He exhibited the truth with respect to the

nature and necessity of regeneration by the special influences of the Spirit of God; and the atonement of Christ as the only ground of the sinner's hope of pardon, justification, and eternal life. He illustrated and enforced the truth with respect to the immortality of the soul, a resurrection of the dead, a day of judgment, the endless happiness of the righteous, and the endless misery of the wicked. He could say to those to whom he had preached, "I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men; for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." (Acts, xx. 26.)

Paul in his preaching never lost sight of the mysteries of God. He always kept in view the glorious scheme of redemption by a Mediator, and treated every subject as standing connected with that scheme. Does he speak of this world? He speaks of it as God's world, created by his power, and designed by his wisdom as the place where to display redeeming love. Does he speak of the government of the world? It is God's government, and all events stand connected with the work of redemption. Does he speak of angels? They are the ministers of God, employed in promoting the work of redemption by Jesus Christ. Does he speak of heaven? It is the residence of the redeemed. Does he speak of hell? It is the prison of eternal justice for all who oppose the work of redemption, and refuse to submit to the sceptre of Christ. Thus, as a steward of the mysteries of God, he was faithful. Thus all who are the ministers of Christ, if they would be found faithful, must preach the truths of the gospel. I proceed to show,

III. Why the ministers of Christ should be thus faithful, as stewards of the mysteries of God.

1. They should be thus faithful, because these mysteries are the great instrument of salvation. "The law of the Lord," by which is meant the whole system of revealed truth, "is perfect, converting the soul." "Is not my word like as fire, saith the Lord, and as a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" "For I am not ashamed," says St. Paul, "of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation." "Of his own will," says St. James, "begat he us by the word of truth." "Being born (says the Apostle Peter) not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever."

That the truths of the gospel are the great instrumental cause of reclaiming the rebellious, and of extending the kingdom of righteousness, is uniformly taught in the oracles of God, and is confirmed beyond controversy by facts. We have not one well authenticated instance, in the history of the world, of a person unacquainted with the revealed will of God, who has given evidence of possessing those moral feelings, which those possess who are renewed and who are the friends of God. Wherever the apostles went among the heathen, they found them all of one character, alienated from God, and dead in trespasses and sins. Thus it has been in every age since. The kingdom of righteousness has never extended beyond a knowledge of the revealed will of God.

We are explicitly assured, that the *preaching* of the

gospel by the stewards of the mysteries of God is emphatically the means of salvation, and of extending the kingdom of Christ. "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on Him, in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe on Him, of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear, without a preacher? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God;" and by the word of God *preached* by his messengers. The evidence of facts confirms this. When the apostles entered on the duties of their office as preachers, the power of the mysteries of God was manifest. Those who were ignorant, and living without hope in the world, were by their preaching turned from darkness to light, and became the friends of God and the followers of Christ. We have no reason to believe, that any would have been saved in *Rome*, *Corinth*, *Galatia* or *Philippi*, had not the apostles preached there.

True indeed it is, that Paul may plant, and Apollos water, but God must give the increase. No doctrine is more clearly taught in the sacred Scriptures, than that of divine influences, and the absolute necessity of these to reclaim the ungodly, and bring them into the fold of Christ. "The Holy Spirit is the great Agent in making effectual all the means, which become effectual to the conversion of sinners." But, let it be remembered, the *word* of God is the *sword* of his Spirit. Where that has been faithfully dispensed by the ministers of Christ, God has been pleased to grant his Spirit, and to make his word effectual.

What was it, that made so great an alteration in the heathen world after the ascension of Christ, so that from the worshippers of demons, and the practice of every kind of iniquity, they became the worshippers of God and obedient to his will? Was it *the philosophy of Greece?* Was it the *morality of Socrates?* Was it the *Eleusinian mysteries?* It was none of these. It was the *mysteries of God*, clearly and faithfully dispensed by those appointed for that purpose. What is it that produces such astonishing effects, and has such a salutary influence on many of the heathen in the East and in the West at the present day? Is it the *code* of *Zoroaster?* Is it the *philosophy* (*ethics*) of *Confucius?* Is it the *religion* of *Mahomet?* No:—it is the *truths of revelation* illustrated and enforced by the humble missionaries of the cross. What is it that makes so great an alteration in some within the circle of our own acquaintance, and changes them from revilers of that which is good, to the friends of God's holy kingdom? Is it the truths of *mere natural religion?* Is it the *moral sentiments* of *Seneca*, or of *Epictetus*, or of any of the works of *human genius?* It is none of these. It is the *mysteries of God*, the *truths of revelation.* Where these have been clearly and faithfully dispensed, God has mercifully granted his Holy Spirit to convince of sin, and to renew and sanctify the heart. But where these truths have been rejected or neglected, and the religion of nature has been substituted for the mysteries of God, the slumbers of moral death have been uninterrupted; the rational and all-interesting inquiry, "What must I do to be saved?" has not been

heard; the song of praise for renewing grace has not been sung; the Spirit of God, in his renovating influences, has not moved there.

If then to extend the kingdom of Christ, and to raise men from the ruins of the apostacy, and prepare them for the endless joys of heaven, is an object of importance, how great is the obligation, upon the stewards of the mysteries of God, to be faithful in dispensing these mysteries.

2. They should be faithful, because God requires it, and to Him they must give an account of their stewardship. "Moreover it is *required* in stewards, that a man be found faithful." This God requires of all to whom he has intrusted the dispensation of his word. So plain are his commands in this respect, that they cannot be misunderstood. To them as his ambassadors to a guilty and perishing world, God has given his directions, and from these they have no liberty to deviate. He has not submitted it to them to determine whether they will preach the truths of his word or not. On this point he has given them no discretionary power.

At the tribunal of their Divine Master, they must give an account of their stewardship. If they are unfaithful, no class of men will have a more solemn account to give of themselves, than the ministers of Christ. If through their neglect to exhibit, illustrate, and enforce the truths of God's word; or if, by preaching false doctrine, any of those to whom they preach perish, their blood will be required at their hands. If they are faithful, none will have a more joyful account to give than they. To them

will their Lord say, "Well done good and faithful servants, enter ye into the joy of your Lord." Their obligations to be faithful are urged upon them by all the solemn considerations of accountableness to God, and of the retributions of eternity.

From the subject thus illustrated, we may see the impropriety of rejecting any of the doctrines of the Bible, merely because they relate to things the nature of which we do not comprehend. There is nothing in the nature of religion, natural or revealed, that can render it proper thus to reject any doctrine, which would not render it equally proper to reject a doctrine in any of the sciences, on the same ground. But the fundamental truths in all the sciences relate to things the nature of which is mysterious and incomprehensible. To be consistent then, if we reject any of the doctrines of revealed religion, because they relate to things the nature of which we do not comprehend, we must reject the fundamental truths of all the sciences, and if we reject these, we must reject all the truths which depend on these. The principle, therefore, if adopted, will lead to unlimited skepticism.

It has been said, "that mystery constitutes no part of religion, and that where mystery begins religion ends." It is readily admitted, that it is no part of religion to explain what is incomprehensible, and not revealed. It is no part of religion to explain *how* God created the world; *how* he operates in governing it; *how* his Spirit operates on ours in regeneration; *how* God will raise the dead; or *how* the divine nature was united with the

human in the person of Christ. But it does not hence follow, that it is no part of religion *to believe* what we cannot comprehend, and *to believe facts*, the manner of which we cannot explain. It does not hence follow, that it is no part of religion *to believe* in the existence, eternity, omniscience and omnipresence of God, the creation and government of the world, the incarnation of the Son of God, and the resurrection of the body.

It is no part of philosophy to explain how one body tends towards another; how motion is communicated by impulse; how the magnet gives polarity to the needle; how water becomes a solid when its temperature is reduced to a certain degree; or how the motion of the muscles follows volition. But it does not hence follow, that it is no part of philosophy to believe that bodies do tend towards each other; that motion is communicated by impulse; that the magnet does give polarity to the needle; that water does become solid; and that the motion of the body does follow volition.

We cannot, as rational beings, adopt the principle, that what is mysterious and incomprehensible in religion, is *therefore* to be disbelieved. This principle would lead us not merely to the rejection of the doctrines of revealed religion, but to the rejection of all the doctrines of natural religion; and, if we would retain anything like consistency, to universal skepticism. Our belief can be safely regulated only by evidence. To attempt to regulate it by anything else, would be folly and madness. The testimony of God demands our belief. To that we should always listen with the

humble, prayerful, and teachable disposition of children.

Another obvious conclusion from the subject, as it has been illustrated, is, that it deeply concerns every one to attend to the peculiar doctrines of revelation, and to become intimately acquainted with them. The fact, that *God* has made them known, is of itself sufficient to convince us of their importance. In no other science, except that of Theology or Religion, has God seen fit to become our immediate Instructor. The truths comprised in the other sciences we are left to investigate by our own powers. They all, as regards their utility, have respect to our condition in this world. We shall have no use for them, when our connexion with this world ceases. But the truths comprised in the system of revelation, have respect to us as the subjects of God's moral government, and as beings who are to exist forever. In this respect they hold a place, in point of importance, infinitely above the truths of all other sciences. Of the truths comprised in the other sciences we may be ignorant without endangering our future happiness; but, of the truths of God's word, we cannot be ignorant, without placing in jeopardy our eternal all. The peculiar doctrines of revelation, which have respect to the mediatorial scheme of salvation, are to us, as rebels against the King of Heaven, now placed under a dispensation of mercy, of infinite importance. If we reject these, we reject the instruction of God; and if we reject the instruction of God, we must perish. "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three wit-

nesses. Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?"

The subject suggests to those, who are stewards of the mysteries of God, some of the marks of ministerial faithfulness. Among these is preaching the peculiar doctrines of the gospel in all their just extent. It deeply concerns us, my brethren, to inquire whether we have this mark of ministerial faithfulness. Do we in our preaching give to the mysteries of God, to the peculiar doctrines of revelation, that prominent place, which Paul did in his preaching? Do we represent Christ in his Divine and Mediatorial character, and all the doctrines comprised in the plan of salvation by him, as they are represented in the word of God? Can we call those to whom we have preached to record, that we have not shunned to declare unto them all the revealed counsel of God? Have we, in this respect, watched for souls, as those who must give account? If we have done thus, we have the approbation of our Lord and Master. To Him we must soon give account of our stewardship. It becomes us not to count our life dear to ourselves, "so that we might finish our course with joy, and the ministry we have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." (Acts, xx. 24.)

The subject may now be applied to him, who is to be consecrated to the work of the ministry.

Dear Sir,—

The work of a steward of the mysteries of God, to which you are devoting yourself, and to which you are this day to be consecrated, while it is a work of the highest responsibility, is the best work ever assigned to man.

One branch of your duty, and one that holds a pre-eminent place, has been illustrated in the discourse to which you have been attending. Your love of the gospel, and your cordial attachment to the interests of Christ's kingdom, will influence you to desire nothing more, than to unfold the mysteries of God for the instruction and salvation of those who are now to be committed to your care. Under the influence of this attachment, you will give not only your heart, but your time, and all your talents to the work of the ministry.

As a steward of the mysteries of God, whose business emphatically it is to exhibit, illustrate, and enforce the truths of God's word, you will make all your literary acquirements subservient to this end. Knowing that it is the mysteries of God, which are by his Spirit made powerful unto salvation, you will be solicitous so to exhibit, and so to illustrate and enforce these mysteries, that they shall be fully understood by all to whom you preach.

Your work, as a steward of these mysteries, is great, and you are ready to say, "Who is sufficient for these things?" Remember the promise of Him who has said, "My grace is sufficient for thee." For ability to discharge, and for success in discharging the duties of your

office, always feel your dependence on divine grace. Be vigilant, be faithful, be strong in the Lord, and he will not leave nor forsake you.

God grant that you may be eminently useful, and that this people may be your crown of joy and rejoicing in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ at his coming. May God ever grant you his presence and blessing!

The subject may next be applied to the church and people, who usually worship God in this house.

Christian Brethren and Friends,—

You all admit that it is the duty of a minister of Christ to preach the mysteries of God clearly and faithfully. Is it not then your duty to hear them thus preached, and cordially to embrace them? You all admit that the trust, committed to a steward of the mysteries of God, is a trust of great responsibility, and that it is a solemn thing to preach the gospel. You cannot avoid being filled with very affecting apprehensions in view of an unfaithful minister, one who handles the word of God deceitfully, neglects the duties of his office, and takes little or no interest in the spiritual welfare of those committed to his charge. In this you judge and feel correctly. But allow me to say, it is a solemn thing to *hear* the gospel preached, and that the responsibility of the *hearer*, as well as of the preacher, is great. On all who hear the gospel faithfully dispensed, it will have an influence:—it will be a season of life unto life, or of death unto death, according to the temper of heart with

which it is heard. The *hearer*, as well as the preacher, must give an account to God. "Take heed, therefore, how ye hear." We cannot but be filled with fearful apprehensions in view of those who can, Sabbath after Sabbath, and year after year, hear the gospel preached, without any feelings of interest, and without any solicitude for their own spiritual and eternal welfare. *Take heed therefore, how ye hear.*

A faithful steward of the mysteries of God is one of the richest blessings God can bestow on a church and people. Such a blessing, we trust, you are this day to receive. Your expectations from him, who is now to be set over you in the Lord, will, it is confidently believed, be answered, so far as we ought to place confidence in any one of our imperfect race. He will come to you from time to time in this house, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. Let it always be your desire, that he may exhibit to you the pure doctrines of God's word. Encourage him in the faithful discharge of his numerous and arduous duties. Always give him an interest in your supplications at the throne of grace. Hear, and love, and obey the truth.

To this numerous assembly the subject addresses itself.

God has been pleased, my fellow-sinners, to place us under a dispensation of mercy, and to give us a revelation of his will. For this our hearts ought to rise in gratitude and praise. Everything around us is fitted to make us humble and self-diffident, and to teach us our

need of the instruction of God. We cannot be too cautious in guarding against being led from the pure doctrines of God's word by that pride of human reasoning, that spirit of false philosophy which characterized the Greeks in the days of Paul, and which has influenced numbers in every age since to wrest the Scriptures, and to reject the peculiar doctrines of revelation. To the infidel and to the semi-infidel, we may commend ourselves by such a spirit. But, to our Father who is in heaven, it is a spirit which must be infinitely offensive.

"Is it reasonable, that a creature, who cannot voluntarily shut his eyes, nor move his fingers without an incomprehensible mystery, should be startled and offended, because in what God reveals concerning his own infinite nature, he finds something, which he cannot comprehend, something, which he cannot understand?—that a creature, who feels himself baffled in his greatest efforts of intellect by the vegetation of a blade of grass, or the nature of the vital principle which moves the wing of the smallest insect, should be startled and offended, because he cannot comprehend the essence and the mode of existence of the infinite God?" Of this judge ye. "God will bring low the pride of man." "The *meek* He will guide in judgment, the *meek* He will teach his way."

Our condition, as beings forming a character for an eternal state of existence, is unspeakably interesting. The issue of our trial will soon be known. The time is at hand, when it will be said, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy

still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still." (Rev. xxii. 11.) "Behold now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation." "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."

AMEN!

THE BIBLE ADAPTED TO MAN AS HE IS.

[NEW ALBANY, INDIANA, 1851.]

THE BIBLE ADAPTED TO MAN AS HE IS.*

To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.—*Isaiah*, iii. 20.

Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.—*John*, v. 39.

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.—2 *Tim.* iii. 16, 17.

For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning; that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope.—*Rom.* xv. 4.

For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.—2 *Pet.* i. 21.

The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.—*Deut.* xxix. 29.

The single proposition, which I propose to establish and to illustrate in the present discourse, is the following, namely:

The Bible contains a divine revelation adapted to man as he is.

Man is endowed by his Creator with certain senses and faculties, which distinguish him from all other animals. Besides the five corporeal senses—seeing, feeling, hearing, tasting and smelling—which belong, in a greater or

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less degree, to the brute creation, he is endued with consciousness, understanding, reason, memory and conscience. These senses and faculties are the sources or avenues and instrumental means, through and by which all his knowledge of every kind is acquired, arranged, classified, preserved, and rendered available for use, and for all practical purposes.

By his five senses, he becomes acquainted with the external world; with the properties of matter; and with an indefinite variety of objects, which, in no other way, could reach his mind, or become ideas, notions or conceptions. By these he perceives what is without and foreign to himself.

By consciousness or reflection, the mind takes notice of its own operations and modes of existence.

By the understanding, he comprehends facts, premises, axioms, propositions, statements, testimony, motives, principles, the indications of his senses, etc.

By reason, he compares objects, actions, events, institutions; deduces conclusions from premises, from experience, from observation; infers what will be, from what is or has been—the future from the past or present;—generalizes from specimens or particulars:—Hence all science or sound philosophy.

By conscience or the moral sense, when duly enlightened, he perceives and appreciates the moral nature and character of actions, motives, customs, laws, manners, fashions, etc.

Now, what *a priori* should we expect a divine revelation to be? Evidently, it should be such a manifestation,

code, or system, as would be adapted to the nature, constitution, character and capacity of man,—to his understanding, reason and conscience,—to his wants, defects and actual condition. He must be able to determine what is a genuine revelation; to decide on the evidence and claims of whatever pretends or professes to be a revelation.

Does the Bible contain such a revelation? Is it addressed and suited to man as he is? Does it attempt any violence or imposition on his intellect, reason, or conscience? Does it demand of him a blind, irrational, implicit faith in the mysterious, incomprehensible, incredible or impossible?—in that which either contradicts or transcends the human reason? Does the Bible itself furnish any just or specious ground for the objections often urged on the score of arbitrary requirements or mystical teachings or unintelligible dogmas?

1. I answer, first, that, at no period, from Moses to the last of the apostles, was human belief in any fact or doctrine or proposition whatever, commanded or inculcated, without sufficient intelligible satisfactory evidence.

No such thing as implicit faith, or faith without evidence, was ever exacted from any man.

Every man was and is allowed to examine, scrutinize, and judge for himself, in regard to the facts, miracles, institutions, precepts, principles, prophesies, recorded in the Bible.

2. We have the right this day—every man for himself—to inquire and to decide, according to the evidence, what is Scripture, or the word of God, or holy writ.—

What books or portions of books are to be received as canonical or authoritative, or as a revelation, or as inspired [*i.e.* written by men enlightened and directed by the Holy Spirit,] and therefore worthy of universal belief and acceptation. Of course, but very few individuals, however learned or gifted, are competent to a thorough investigation of this sort. And modest men will generally acquiesce in the concurring judgment of the wise and the good, as deliberately pronounced and received in all ages and countries where the Bible is or has been known and studied.

3. We have the right also to ask and to determine what is meant by inspiration. Here is a wide range for diversity of opinion. And the subject is open to research and discussion. Without repeating the technical phraseology and distinctions current in the tomes of our standard theology, I remark, that the term is explained or used as implying either, (1.) Plenary or perfect inspiration, not only of the matter but of the words: and that the Bible is the language, the *ipsissima verba*, of the Deity,—neither more nor less. Or (2.) a general, though sure, divine guidance and superintendence: so that the writer could not err in the substance of his record. Or (3.) as indicative of the reliable integrity, honesty and truthfulness of the sacred penman: so that facts and doctrines are to be received without doubt or hesitation; while mere opinions upon ordinary topics, especially such as relate to science, may pass for what they are worth.

Agreeably then to the last and lowest degree of inspi-

ration accorded to the writers or compilers of the Scriptures, we are constrained to concede to them the utmost fidelity, the most self-denying impartiality, and the severest conscientiousness. And as they testify to the naked fact, that revelations were frequently made to themselves, and that miracles were wrought by themselves or others in the presence of all the people, we may safely and consistently allow the highest degree of inspiration to such passages—whatever may be our doubts or views or speculations concerning other portions of the sacred volume. Simply as truthful historians, they are entitled to this amount of general confidence and respect. No honest infidel philosopher could, with a shadow of reason, refuse to rank them in this class or category. He must either denounce them as rogues and impostors, or admit their testimony to the inspiration necessarily implied in many of their statements. Even this would suffice to establish the verity of every important fact and essential doctrine of the Bible and of the Christian economy.

4. All the miracles specified in the Bible, designed to influence human belief or action, were addressed to the senses—to the common sense and reason of all sorts and classes of the people. There was no resort to trickery or fraud or mystification—to cunning devices or complicated apparatus—to elaborate mysterious contrivances—to the artifices of jugglery or legerdemain or sleight-of-hand—to any attempt even at concealment, deception or imposition—to any appeal to the superstitious fears or passions or prejudices of vulgar ignorance. All was open,

palpable, simple, transparent, undisguised, undoubted, undisputed reality.—As clearly and obviously matters-of-fact, as any other ordinary daily occurrences. Such were the public miracles of Moses and the prophets—of Christ and the apostles. If wrought as recorded, the people who witnessed them could not have failed to believe or regard them as *facts;* to whatever agency they might have ascribed them, or however falsely they may have argued about their design, or however perverse and rebellious may have been their conduct in spite of them. Whether WE, at this late day, ought to believe them, depends on the evidence which we possess in their favour. The nature of testimony will be considered presently.

How different were the Bible miracles from all other ancient, as well as from all modern, spurious, pretended miracles—those of the Romish Church, for example!—Thus, in the doctrine of transubstantiation, we are commanded to believe that bread and wine are flesh and blood—nay, that every particle of the consecrated host (wafer or cup) is the whole Christ, God and man, Deity and humanity!—against the evidence of all our senses, as well as of our reason and experience!

The entire province of miracles—Bible and other—is still open to candid scrutiny. The scriptural miracles will lose nothing by comparison with any and all others. The Protestant challenges the fair exercise of reason here as everywhere. The Romanist demands belief in the absurd and impossible. What would be thought and said, if our Saviour had sent the water-vessels to

the marriage guests, with a message that they were filled with excellent wine; while to the sight, taste and smell of every person present, they contained nothing but water? Suppose, when they manifested incredulity or disappointment, he had said, you must believe, in spite of your senses, that you are drinking capital wine—though under the *species*, form or appearance, and with all the sensible attributes (accidents without the substance) of water! Such must your faith be! You must believe my word! The more incredible, and contradictory to the natural faculties, the stronger and more meritorious your faith! Try the case of Lazarus, and others, in the same fashion.

5. Such prophecies as have been fulfilled—or which, it is asserted, have been fulfilled—are open to fair investigation, as matters of history and of fact. Here, again, is a large field for the exercise of reason, judgment, sagacity and intelligence; and for the proper use of learning, logic and sound philosophy.

Of prophecies now in course of actual accomplishment, we may judge and decide in like manner. It is our right.

Of those to be fulfilled hereafter, we need affirm nothing. We may safely and wisely leave them to future generations.

6. Strictly speaking, there are no mysterious doctrines or propositions in the Bible. A mysterious revelation would be a contradiction in terms. Whatever is revealed ceases to be a mystery just to the extent in which it is revealed. Everything unknown or not comprehended is

a mystery. Still there are mysterious facts in the Bible, as everywhere in nature and in science.* The fact that there is a sun in our system no man doubts. But how light and heat are imparted—or of what form and substance—many may be ignorant. About the latter, which are mysteries to them, they may have no conception or belief. While in the proposition, the sun exists, or there is a sun, or the sun shines, their faith is firm, and cannot be shaken by any species of cavil or sophistry.

We believe the fact, that the tree grows. But *how*, we may not be able to explain. The *how* is a mystery, and therefore not a part of our belief.

An eclipse of sun or moon is a phenomenon often beheld with wonder and terror by the ignorant. The cause and manner are mysteries to them. The fact itself is patent to their senses: and they believe it. *How* it has been produced, is beyond their comprehension. The astronomer might enlighten them. He could explain or *reveal* the mystery. To believe the naked proposition, that the sun is eclipsed, or that the oak grows, does not involve the necessity of our being able to conceive *how* the one or the other is effected. This is an important distinction: and, if kept in view, will relieve the Bible from the gratuitous charge of demanding a belief in sheer mysteries.

Thus the doctrine or fact of the resurrection from the dead, is clearly revealed or taught in the New Testa-

* The author evidently distinguishes here between the *bare fact*, which, being revealed or known, is no mystery, and the *nature* of the fact which is not revealed or known—and therefore mysterious.

ment. And, as a fact, is credible; if the testimony in its behalf be sufficient and satisfactory. Of the manner of it—or *how* it is to be accomplished—we are not informed; and therefore we are not required to have any distinct notion or belief about it. In this lies all the mystery—and a *mystery* because not revealed. The very difficulties and objections which puzzle and revolt the *wise* and *profound* of the present day, occurred to the same class in the days of Paul: and he met them, as they must be met still. "But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?" "Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die:" "It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body." (1 Cor. xv. 35, 36, 44.) The apostle offered no explanation as to the "*how* are the dead raised up?"—He barely glances at the most frequent and notorious fact in the physical world, obvious and unquestioned, believed by everybody, and understood by none. The process of vegetation is as mysterious as the raising up of the dead. So, also, are swept away whole volumes of subtle argumentation and ingenious quibbles about the corporeal identity of each individual after the resurrection. "It is raised a spiritual body." Worse and worse. The illustration is harder to be understood—involves more mystery—than the original simple proposition. *Spiritual?* what is spiritual? and a "spiritual body:" who can tell what that is?

Regarded simply as a proposition, the expression—"the dead shall be raised up," is just as intelligible as

this other, "the living shall die." And were the first an ordinary occurrence, it would appear as natural as the last. Who can tell what is either *life* or *death?* The principle of vitality, animal and vegetable, except as an obvious fact, is to us as great a mystery as any in the universe.

7. There is nothing revealed, which is either contrary to our reason, or above our reason, or which we are incompetent to understand. We are continually creating difficulties and mysteries by idle speculation and vain philosophy—where none exist in Scripture.

Thus, evil, sin, crime, pain, misery, death, prevail in the world. Therefore, say some, "God is the author of sin;" or, "there is no God;" or, "nothing sinful, wrong or imperfect exists in fact, but only in appearance;" or, "sin has got into the world in spite of the Deity." Now we assuredly know *two facts*, if we credit the Bible; namely, 1. That God has created the universe. And, 2. That sin exists in it. And, also, two other facts: 1. That God cannot be guilty, sinful, criminal, weak or imperfect; as we always assume man to be, when he causes or permits evil which he could have prevented. And, 2. That God is the Creator of a world in which sin and sinners abound, and yet is not the Author of sin, in the sense which implies blameworthiness or guilt or imperfection.

How this can be—how God could make a world with sin in it, or with the certainty or even possibility of sin's ever entering it, and yet not be sinful, or the author of sin, we are not informed. It is a great mystery—not

yet revealed or understood. And this unrevealed mystery is therefore no part of our belief. We are not required to believe or to know anything about the matter.

Thus, too, God governs the world. His providence extends over all his works. The past, present and future are all naked and open before him. His foreknowledge is without limit, as is his power. Now in what way, or *how*, his absolute government can harmonize with human free agency and responsibility, is not revealed. It is a mystery, about which we need not trouble or perplex ourselves. Divine providence, preordination, foreknowledge, election, predestination—on the one hand—may be asserted and believed. Perfect freedom of will and action; the ability to choose or refuse; entire responsibility in man—on the other hand—are equally certain and unquestionable. We believe both upon undoubted evidence. And yet, *how* to conjoin or reconcile them, is beyond our capacity or knowledge. They seem to us direct contradictions. Here, again, is a mystery not revealed: about which, the less we believe and speculate, the better.

We cannot believe what we do not understand. Let any man make the trial. He will find, either that he uses words without meaning, or that he does attach to them a meaning of some sort. Words, phrases, propositions, which suggest no ideas to the mind, may be repeated by devout religionists until they become a part, and sometimes, a main or essential part of their creed and devotional formula. They may be in an unknown tongue even. But ask for their meaning;

and they cannot answer. They are like the schoolboy, who has learned by rote scraps of Latin which he cannot translate.

But is not the Trinity a mysterious *doctrine*, which no mortal can render intelligible? I answer, first, that if the word conveys no meaning, then we use a mere arbitrary term of human invention, and of no significance or efficacy whatever. And secondly, the elaborate endeavours and essays, made by learned divines, to explain the doctrine, prove that they at least profess to understand something about it. And their belief extends to that *something*, and no further. Most theologians, however, are content to receive the *so-styled* doctrine as a revealed mysterious *fact*. They believe in the divine testimony, and attempt no explanation. No definitions, descriptions, or illustrations, ever yet given, appear satisfactory to any real thinker or profound reasoner. I have occasionally heard from the pulpit, and seen in print, what the preacher and writer deemed a fair and triumphant exposition. As thus, for example, we see the same identical substance, at one time assuming the form of *snow*, then of *water*, and then again of *ice*. Are not these three ONE? Ay, and add *hail* and *gas*, and we have *five* in one. Now this comparison might be worth something, or be pertinent to the subject, if it could be shown that the same substance is snow, ice and water, at one and the same time. But alas, for the simile and the argument! The *water* is neither *ice* nor *snow*, while it is water. And does the Father cease to be *Father*, when he acts or officiates as the *Son?*

I once heard a minister, very flippantly and dogmatically, assert in the pulpit, and declare to his congregation, that the three persons of the sacred Trinity were like the three offices which he then actually sustained, as rector or pastor of the church, principal of an academy, and head of a family!! This was much in the same vein with the criticism of the learned Archbishop Whately upon the primitive meaning of *person* and its classical etymon *persona*. As illustrative of the sense in which the term was probably first used by the Christian fathers, he quotes from Cicero the well-known passage,—"tres personas unus suscipio, summa animi acquitate; meam, adversarii, judicis." That is, in preparing his pleadings, he imagined himself in the place of his opponent, and of the judge, as well as his own. Or he assumed successively the three characters or *persons* of Plaintiff, Defendant and Judge—that he might thus thoroughly try the case, and weigh the arguments on both sides, and under every aspect, before he appeared in Court in behalf of his client. Agreeably to this construction, the whole affair would be resolved into a mere verbal ambiguity—a *controversia verbi*, or dispute about words. And we might accordingly assign to the Deity as many *persons* as he sustains distinct offices towards his intelligent creatures. He is Creator, Governor, Preserver, Judge — as well as Father, Redeemer, Sanctifier, etc. Any theory or interpretation which proves too much, is manifestly inadmissible and worthless. I repeat, then, we must receive the Trinity as a revealed *fact* —upon divine testimony—and be content to leave it

just where and just as infinite wisdom has proclaimed it.*

That we believe in thousands of ultimate facts, the nature and causes of which we do not understand, is notorious. For example, the telegraph, chronometer, steamboat, telescope, mariner's compass, philosophical instruments, and complex machinery of all sorts—though used, handled, trusted, by everybody—are comprehended by exceedingly few. Not one in a million could tell how words are conveyed by the telegraph or themselves by the steamer:—yet both are employed with as much confidence as the most familiar agricultural or mechanical implements.

8. Besides the knowledge derived from the evidence of our senses, and from the exercise of our judgment, reason, conscience and memory, testimony contributes largely to the amount. Adequate testimony is always trusted, accepted, believed. Probably, the largest portion of our acquired knowledge or information comes from this source. It is as natural to believe in human testimony, as in what we see, hear or feel. Children believe all that is told them: and their easy docile credulity is often imposed on. But in spite of human mendacity and liability to error, we are obliged to confide in testimony; or to abide in ignorance of all events and things which we cannot witness or investigate personally, or for ourselves. What do we, what could we, know of history or geography, of past ages or remote

* For the passage referred to above, see Whately's Logic, third edition, London, 1829, p. 303.

countries, except by and through the testimony of others? Reason alone could never inform us or discover to us the existence even of a single state or kingdom or city or individual—of London or Paris, of Napoleon or Wellington. I mean, that, by no process of reasoning in our closet, could we ever make such discoveries or attain such information. Though by our reason we might solve many a scientific problem, or calculate an eclipse, or measure the distances, magnitudes and velocities of the planets; by no conceivable effort or exercis of mere reason—by no intellectual process whatever—could we ascertain what is being done in Africa or in China, or in Boston, or in the nearest village, or in our neighbour's house. This is above our reason; or rather, is foreign to the province and sphere and capacity of reason. Is there then no way—no possible mode—of getting such information? Yes, from testimony—from the trustworthy traveller—from the reports and descriptions of eye-witnesses—who are competent to judge, and entitled to credit.

In like manner, though it be above the power of reason to discover anything within or concerning the spiritual world; yet if true messengers come to us from the world of spirits, and tell us all about it, we may reasonably believe *them*. That is, it is natural, or consonant with our reason, to believe adequate testimony. The most stubborn incredulity may be constrained to yield to the weight of testimony, and to believe anything but impossibilities. Should a citizen of the moon find his way to our planet, we would eagerly listen to

his strange and marvellous accounts. And should a dozen others, successively or simultaneously, without concert or collusion or even acquaintance with each other, arrive among us from the same quarter, and make the same or similar statements and disclosures, I suppose we should at length believe their testimony; and perhaps record their communications in our elementary schoolbooks, for the enlightenment of the general mind, as undoubted verities.

Thus it is with the teachings of the Bible. If the Deity has really condescended to instruct us about our duty and destiny—about a future and spiritual world—is it not reasonable that we should implicitly believe HIM? He only, either directly or by special agents or messengers, could do this. But when done, we are expected, of course, to yield assent to simple, yet all-sufficient testimony, in this, as in less momentous concerns. Could we have or desire a better in the case supposed?

It is currently asserted that there is nothing in Scripture *contrary* to reason, though there are many things *above* it. That there is much, which may be said to be above our reason, is true in one sense, but probably not in *the* sense usually taken for granted. It is true in the sense already recited; and in reference to all kinds of knowledge which reason, by its own proper exertions, can never compass or attain. When we apply to Scripture the phrase "above human reason," we forget that it is natural to believe testimony—that we are so created or constituted, that we cannot help believing testimony.

If this be not an attribute of reason itself, it is certainly an attribute or property of man. It is the province and prerogative of reason or of the intellect to decide on the relevancy, import and value of the testimony exhibited in every instance. But it is natural and rational to believe whatever is, in our own view and according to our deliberate judgment, established by incontrovertible, authoritative, satisfactory testimony.

We might speculate very absurdly about Japan—as we probably do: but should the emperor of that *terra incognita* be pleased to send us a score or two of his most learned, grave and respected servants or subjects, to teach or reveal to us the mysteries of his kingdom, I suppose we should believe and be thankful; and no longer regard them as mysteries. So of Heaven, a future state, the divine government, the plan of redemption, and all spiritual influences and operations. Reason here can achieve nothing but vain conjecture. But the testimony of God, by his accredited ambassadors, assuredly may be believed and honoured. What therefore, in reference to the divine economy, is usually assumed to be *above* human reason, is made credible and plain to us simply and purely as matter of fact upon divine authority or testimony.

We are everywhere in the Bible addressed as reasonable and reasoning, intelligent and responsible, free moral agents. We are never required to yield assent blindly, ignorantly, implicitly, to doctrines or propositions which we do not or cannot understand. In fact, we can have no belief in or about what we do not under-

stand. We may learn to repeat words, phrases, sentences, as already remarked, which we do not comprehend, or which are void of meaning. In such cases, we either believe nothing, or fancy a meaning, and believe what we thus fancy.

A proposition may be intelligible, true, and worthy of all belief, while the *terms* of it may be incomprehensible, or may be mere arbitrary signs or symbols. Thus, God is a spirit—is eternal—is self-existent—is infinite—omnipresent—omnipotent—immutable—omniscient—etc. Here each proposition is obviously true: but who can tell what the terms *God*, *spirit*, *eternity*, *omnipresence*, and the rest, mean? We habitually speak of cause and effect? What is a *cause?* How does any cause produce any effect? How do I see, or hear, or reason, or sleep, or dream, or remember?

The soul is immortal. The dead shall be raised. Jesus Christ is the son of God. Jesus Christ is the son of man. *How?* Though here, both the terms and propositions are plain enough.

A + B = X — Z, may be demonstratively true, though the terms have no meaning.

A is C,—B is C,—therefore A is B,—is a regular logical syllogism, and perfectly intelligible; though the terms again are without meaning.

Jesus Christ died on the cross. The fact is both intelligible and credible. *Why*, in the divine counsels, this stupendous sacrifice was necessary, is not revealed. We are not commanded to understand the *why*. The final cause—its bearing upon our own state and destiny—

is obvious enough because clearly and explicitly revealed.

The Bible then requires no belief in anything incredible or impossible, in anything contrary to reason or above reason, in anything incomprehensible or even hard to be understood. No formal creed, confession, articles, or series of propositions, can there be found recorded as necessary to be subscribed or believed in order to salvation. Faith or belief in Christ, is all the faith or belief demanded or enjoined. Faith in him implies obedience to his commandments; and such obedience is the only sufficient evidence which can be exhibited to the world of the reality of faith.

9. How does the Bible appeal or address itself to the conscience or moral sense of mankind? What kind of *spirit* and *conduct* does the Bible,—or at least, the New Testament,—cherish, encourage, inculcate, prescribe, enforce? Virtue, goodness, purity, benevolence, peace, charity, holiness.—Love to God, and love to man. Forgiveness of enemies; and the doing to others as we would that they should do unto us.

A bigot or a persecutor cannot be a Christian. Paul was both before his conversion. He was neither afterwards. Christ denounced every symptom of a persecuting spirit in his disciples, in the sternest language of rebuke. He taught a species of morality, indeed, far above any known or acknowledged standard, but not above the capacity of reason and conscience to appreciate. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." (Gal. v. 22, 23.)

Religion does not consist in creeds, rites, forms, ceremonies, prayers, sermons, church-membership; nor in any ostentatious pharisaic display of sanctity or zeal. But—"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this: To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." (James, i. 27.) True faith in Christ is always manifested by a right spirit and conduct. But mere orthodoxy, or correct opinions, may be held by the worst of men—by bigots, persecutors, fanatics, profligates, tyrants, robbers, hypocrites, knaves—by the covetous, ambitious, and world-seekers of all sorts.

The real Christian is always a most conscientious man. He acts agreeably to the honest dictates of an enlightened conscience. He fears God, and he has no other fear. He possesses that moral courage which impels to the faithful discharge of every duty, and to the avoidance of every sin—even the appearance of evil. He is bold as a lion in the cause of truth and righteousness. The religion which does not make a good man, is spurious—a base counterfeit.

The disciple of Christ, or the genuine Christian, is never stationary. He grows in grace: advances in holiness: strives to be better: and is daily gaining the victory over some evil propensity or inclination. He is never satisfied with present or actual attainments in virtue. He does not stand still, and look around him with self-complacency, or frown upon others as his inferiors, or boast that he is holier than they. He is humble, meek, forbearing, charitable, forgiving: more

ready to endure than to do wrong: and when slandered or injured, he is neither revengeful nor disposed to retaliate.

I believe the moral or ethical code of the New Testament has never been seriously arraigned, censured or condemned, as too lax and indulgent, by any skeptic or caviller. It strikes at the root of all evil. It controls and regulates the heart, the thoughts and intentions, the affections and passions, the very springs and sources of wicked propensities and actions. It seeks to purify the fountain, that all its streams may be pure also.

The objections usually urged against the Bible morality, are derived from the Old Testament.

The infidel has discovered, what he deems, objectionable passages in the Old Testament, which he is pleased to denounce as immoral, unjust and cruel. Those which I have most frequently encountered in conversation, are the following:—

1. The trial of Abraham, when commanded to sacrifice his son Isaac.

2. The commission of the Israelites to exterminate the inhabitants of Canaan.

3. The visiting of the iniquities of the fathers upon their children or posterity unto the third and fourth generations.

4. The character of David.

5. Prevalence of polygamy—without any direct, positive prohibition or censure.

6. The case of Esau and Jacob: and sundry other individual instances—as the hardening of Pharaoh's heart.

These may serve as specimens. Let them be examined fairly and thoroughly; and upon the ground or premises boldly assumed by the objector. We think they may be easily disposed of—at least to his discomfiture, if not to his conviction.

I shall confine my written remarks, at present, to the single case of Abraham.

Were such a command given to a father *now* as was given to Abraham, it would shock and revolt all our feelings and principles of duty and righteousness. But we forget the character, usages and religious practices of the age and country of the patriarch. He had been accustomed to witness this precise kind of horrible sacrifice, as a most acceptable and meritorious act of devotion and self-denial. He was yet but partially enlightened; and probably still inclined to the superstitious and cruel rites of the idolaters around him. To sacrifice, or to cause to pass through the fire to Moloch, a son—a first-born or only son—was doubtless accounted the noblest proof of piety, as well as the most costly, precious and prevalent offering which could be made to their dreadful deity. Was Abraham prepared to exhibit as high and affecting an instance of his fear, love and reverence towards the true God, as were they towards their false divinities? Let him submit to the same test, and be tried by the same ordeal. He was thus tried. His faith and obedience triumphed; and were thus proved genuine, and above all selfish or sinister considerations. The worshippers of Moloch, agreeably to their own creed and practice, would have regarded him as a saint.

But, besides the abundant and conspicuous proof which he thus gave of a heart and will supremely and unreservedly consecrated to the one living and eternal Jehovah, who had hitherto been his guide, protector and friend; he was to be taught a new lesson; to be disabused of all lingering heathenish propensities of this peculiar kind; and to learn, by a most significant, impressive and awful transaction, that God delighted not in cruel or bloody rites, or in any unnatural violation of human ties and affections. The whole scene was calculated to wean him thoroughly and forever from this gross superstition and most degrading bondage.

The above explanation may suffice to meet the precise objection noticed, and does not conflict with the apostolic representation in the Epistle to the Hebrews. "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son;

"Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called.

"Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure." (Heb. xi. 17, 18, 19.)

Abraham was not then, perhaps never, fully instructed in all moral duties and obligations. He always promptly obeyed the divine command. When he knew the will of God, he never hesitated, for a moment, to perform it. (Heb. xi. 8.) He thus proved the sincerity, as well as superiority, of his faith. But when left, without explicit

directions, to himself—to his own reason, knowledge, experience, early habits and associations—he sometimes erred, went astray, or failed to do right according to the Christian code, which now obtains, as the standard of religious character wherever the light of the gospel has penetrated.

The same or a similar apology may be offered or suggested for the imperfections of the early patriarchs and Old Testament worthies generally.

10. The doctrines of the Bible have been objected to, assailed, controverted, denounced, rejected, or variously expounded. One of these is total depravity. The doctrine of human depravity is explicity and frequently affirmed in Scripture; and is always assumed as a well-known and undoubted fact. We are taught, as in the words of our excellent Confession of Faith, that: "Our first parents, being seduced by the subtilty and temptation of Satan, sinned in eating the forbidden fruit." And that, "By this sin they fell from their original righteousness, and communion with God, and so became dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body." And does not our reason assent to this truth—as a simple fact? Does it not accord with our own experience and observation? with the dictates of conscience? and with universal history?

Even those who affect to doubt respecting the extent or amount of this depravity—as to whether it be natural or inherited, total or universal—are constrained to admit that mankind, on the whole or in the main, are very

wicked, corrupt, perverse, and exceedingly prone to do evil. So that, practically, the difference is hardly worth disputing about.

Another doctrine is the consequent helplessness of man, as a condemned perishing sinner.—His inability to obey the divine law.—And the necessity of the Holy Spirit's agency in the work of conversion, regeneration and sanctification. Is man, then, in consequence of the original corruption of his nature by the disobedience and fall of Adam, utterly helpless, and unable to do the will of his Maker; or to lead an innocent, virtuous, holy life? Does he so need divine aid—the regenerating power and influence of the Holy Spirit—that he can neither repent, nor reform, nor obey, without such supernatural assistance? So the Scriptures teach. And all Christian experience, reason and conscience confirm the scriptural statements on the subject.

Another is Justification by faith alone. "*What is justification?* Justification is an act of God's free grace, whereby he pardoneth all our sins, and accepteth us as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone." (*Shorter Catechism.*)

The doctrine is fully presented in the third chapter of Romans, from verse 19 to the end.

19. "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

20. "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall

no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

21. "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;

22. "Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:

23. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

24. "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

25. "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;

26. "To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

27. "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.

28. "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.

29. "Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also:

30. "Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.

31. "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid; yea, we establish the law."

State the difference between the Romish and Protestant views of the Doctrine.

Notice the objections made by infidels and sectaries.

Show the wisdom and necessity of a vicarious substitute in place of the sinner, etc.

The eternity of future punishment is another of these doctrines. As to the actual demerit of sin and the guilt of the sinner, we may not be competent judges. We may rest assured that the Judge of all the earth will do right. And his own declaration or testimony ought to silence all murmurs, cavils and complaints.

That sin, or rather sinners, will hereafter be punished according to their deserts, or according to the deeds done in the body, is both reasonable and scriptural. The objector assumes that every transgression, however small or trivial in his view, is punishable with everlasting death: and this he thinks hard, cruel, unjust. What, he indignantly demands, doom a man to eternal perdition for a few inconsiderate or not very heinous offences, or for the sins of only a few months or years? The objection rests upon the assumption that the life of the erring party is in the main correct and blameless: and that he, only now and then, becomes heedless, or yields to sudden temptation, or is overcome by passion or sophistry or social influences or conventional usages.—While the Bible exhibits him as altogether corrupt or depraved: and that none, even of his apparently good deeds, proceed from love to God or reverence for his law, character or government. The true state of the case is this: The penalty of transgression continues to be inflicted, or is

endured just as long as the party remains in a sinful state. That is, the punishment is coeval with the offence. The sinner suffers only while he continues to be a sinner. If forever a sinner: why should he not be punished forever? Sin and misery are inseparable here, and everywhere. Were it possible to believe, repent, and become holy after death, there would be hope. But as the tree falls, so shall it lie—("in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be." Eccles. xi. 3.) "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still." (Rev. xxii. 11.) The degree or amount of punishment is likewise apportioned agreeably to the guilt of each individual.

Sin as an infinite evil—requiring an infinite atonement, is still another of the controverted doctrines.

The necessity of an infinite atonement cannot, perhaps, be assumed or urged as proof of the Divinity of Christ, on the ground that sin is an infinite evil, because committed against an infinite God. How can a finite creature do an infinite work, good or bad?—deserve infinite misery or punishment, or infinite happiness or reward? Or can any number of finites make an infinite?

To argue, that sin is an infinite evil, because it required an infinite atonement: or that an infinite atonement was necessary because sin is an infinite evil,—is reasoning in a circle, or rather is a begging of the question. For in either case, the major premise is asserted without proof: and if true, the conclusion would not

follow, or be legitimate. [It would be a *non sequitur*, etc.]

That the penalty of sin, agreeably to the view just presented under the last head, will extend throughout an eternity *a parte post*, and therefore be infinite or endless in duration, is both true and intelligible, as well as just and reasonable.

By these remarks, I mean not to depreciate or to extenuate the evil and the guilt of sin. There is no danger of approaching towards excess or hyperbole in this estimate. The enormity and ill desert of sin immeasurably transcend the grasp of any human mind. Nor is the term *infinite* objectionable or inappropriate, as ordinarily employed, when we speak of sin as an infinite evil, or of the atonement as infinite in value and efficacy. It is only when the attempt is made to use it with logical precision in support of either truth or error, that it becomes obnoxious to criticism and unsafe in argument. It is one, among numerous familiar terms, which we can never comprehend or define. And which can therefore be adroitly converted by a skilful or crafty adversary into a weapon of attack or retaliation, when made the basis of a doctrine or theory—however defensible or even invulnerable, on other grounds.

Thus, Unitarians imagine they utterly demolish the main pillar of the Trinitarian edifice [creed] when they triumphantly parade the fallacy in the argument from the assumed necessity of an infinite atonement—so currently relied on by the orthodox, etc.

Whereas, the incalculable evil of sin, the awful and

hopeless doom of the unrenewed, unpardoned sinner, as well as the all-sufficiency of the atonement or remedy provided, are explicitly revealed, and exhibited in the plainest, least equivocal, and most impressive language. So that, here also, the teaching of the Word and Spirit, if honestly heeded, never fails to meet a hearty response from the reason and conscience.

The eternal sonship of Christ is another. How can God be the eternal Father of an eternal Son? Or how can we predicate eternity of Christ, or of his sonship? Now the difficulty here lies in our exceedingly imperfect conceptions of the term *eternity!* When we speak of father and son, we naturally and from habitual experience, ascribe priority in time to the first. In applying the same terms to God, we easily slide into the same train of association. We think it necessary to allow the Father precedence, at least in time. But, in fact, when we thus conceive of the relation, we do really, though unconsciously, assign a beginning to God the Father also. We think that he should have been, or begun to be, first—however brief the period. Only let God be, and then we can account for the Son. That is, we think of God, like a human father, as existing first, and then the Son. But how long a space must intervene? If the Son had a beginning, then it would follow that God had existed an eternity *a parte ante*, or before the Son. No conceivable duration in time can ever make the slightest approximation towards eternity. If the Son ever began to exist, then the Father must have existed an eternity before him.

Again, eternal Father implies eternal Son,—just as eternal cause implies eternal effect;—or as eternal Creator implies eternal creation. That is, if God has been from all eternity a Father, then has the Son existed from all eternity. If he has been from all eternity a cause, then has there been from all eternity an effect. If an eternal Creator, then has there been an eternal creation: or something *caused* or *created* has been from all eternity.

I do not now attempt to specify *the* effect or *the* creation which our position implies or demands. As God may have been, from all eternity, both Cause and Creator, so he may be still; that is, he may still be the cause of new effects, and the Creator of new worlds. But to whatever effect or created thing we assign a beginning, we must assuredly assume or concede that the Deity had existed an eternity beforehand. Thus, if we say, that this earth, or that our entire solar system, or that the universe was created six or ten thousand years, or a hundred million ages ago, we leave to the Almighty still a complete undiminished prior eternity.

Now if God ever *began* to cause, create, or produce anything whatever, spiritual or material, as a first effort, act, display, or manifestation of his infinite power and wisdom; then we can suppose or imagine the starting point; or we can fix the date hypothetically, and as mathematicians would do in their mode of reasoning—no matter how far back—it is still a definite point or moment—a beginning in time:—then, what was He doing in all the vast eternity precedent? Was he

inactive—doing nothing? Was that eternity a blank? Here we are lost—overwhelmed in a fathomless and shoreless ocean!

That *matter* is eternal, has been maintained by some who reject revelation, and who especially denounce the doctrine or fact of Christ's eternal sonship as impossible and absurd. They assert the eternity of matter in order to get rid of a Deity altogether, or to identify him with the universe itself. And the orthodox are prone so far to concur with them, as to condemn their opinion or belief as either atheistic or pantheistic;—of course, as unscriptural, and worthy of the sternest reprobation. Probably both are wrong. For if it could be proved that matter is eternal, it would not follow that it was not *created:* nor would it destroy or diminish the necessity for an eternal omnipotent Creator. I do not mean to say, or even to insinuate, that matter *is* eternal. I know nothing of the subject. But simply as a speculative proposition—"matter is eternal"—if any choose to affirm it, I do say that, in strict legitimate logic, no theological heresy could be deduced from it: much less, the horrible dogma, that there is no God, or that the universe is God. I would meet the objector upon his own ground, and demonstrate the necessity, upon his own hypothesis, of an eternal Creator or first cause; and thence illustrate the very doctrine of Scripture which he so boldly impugns, namely, the eternal generation of the Son of God.

I have already stated, that, from the very nature and perfections of the Deity, he must have been active (not

passive or inert) from all eternity. And if so, according to our conceptions, he must have created or caused *something* from all eternity. It may have been spirit, and not matter. He may have been the eternal Creator of a world of spirits, as well as the eternal Father of a Son. And from the Father and the Son may have proceeded the eternal Sanctifier or Holy Spirit. Now as there is no logical or philosophical difficulty in conceiving *creation*—whether of spirit or matter, or of both—to have been the eternal effect or work of an eternal Creator, so is there no similar difficulty in conceiving or accrediting the fact of Christ's eternal generation. And as the latter is distinctly revealed, according to the judgment of the ablest Biblical critics and interpreters—that is, as it rests upon divine testimony—it becomes a *certainty*, against which human reason cannot discover a single plausible objection; I mean, so far as human reason alone is competent to the investigation.

Christian heresies, (as Arian and Socinian,) as well as infidel theories, have resulted from the attempt to go beyond the province both of revelation and reason. Their fallacy lies in placing the Deity at the top or extreme end of the line, which represents eternity to their mind —that is, at the point where eternity *begins!*—And then they can easily account for any and every thing as a subsequent effect. Now we have shown that this fixed point, however remote, is but the beginning of *time:* and that an eternity remains still beyond, unapproached and inexhaustible. So that their line of eternity denotes after all only a very long time; and no length of time

can bear any possible relation or proportion to eternity. If we could conceive of a first act of the Deity, that act would have a beginning; and there would yet be an eternity *a parte ante* to be accounted for.

11. Another branch or aspect of materialism may be worthy of a passing notice in this connexion. It has been asserted, that: "The soul is material, and therefore mortal or perishable, like the body." This again is a mere sophism. Were it true that the soul is material, it would not follow that it must of necessity be mortal, or that it could not be immortal. If the Deity has endued matter with the capacity of thinking and reasoning *here:* why not continue the same hereafter and forever? Materialists admit the first. How can they consistently deny the latter? They maintain that matter itself (inorganic and other) is imperishable, or indestructible, or incapable of annihilation. Why may not *reasoning* or *thinking* matter be equally durable or imperishable or immortal?

I am no advocate of materialism under any of its specious forms or in regard to any of its speculative tendencies. I reject it as unsupported either by Scripture or reason. But the bare gratuitous assumption, that man is a simple, homogeneous, material substance or organism, does not affect the question of his immortality or of his existence in a future state—under a different modification, if you please, of the same or similar material particles. The problem of a future state has never been solved by human philosophy. The immortality of the soul, as a mere fact, rests exclusively upon

divine revelation. If God has truly proclaimed the fact, we believe his testimony. And we do not doubt his ability to execute whatever he has promised or purposed.

That the soul is not material might be inferred from Gen. ii. 7: "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."

That the world is not eternal, may be proved from Scripture, though not by reason. Thus, John, xvii. 5: "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was," etc.

12. Still there is in one sense a real mystery. The divine government, revealed religion, the whole of Christianity—is a mystery to the natural man.

1 Cor. ii. 14: "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

Rom. viii. 7: "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." (Matt. xi. 25, 26.)

The Bible is its own *interpreter*, its own *witness*, and its own *judge*. As such the following are its attributes, viz.:—

It is *inspired.* 2 Peter, i. 21: "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

It is *authoritative.* John, xii. 48: "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."

It is *intelligible.* Eph. i. 9: "Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself:" and Eph. iii. 4: "Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ."

It is *moral.* Ps. xix. 7, 8, 9, etc.: "The statutes of the Lord are right," etc. etc.

It is *perpetual.* 1 Peter, i. 25: "But the word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."

It is *catholic.* John, viii. 47: "He that is of God, heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God." Also, Mark, xvi. 15: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." 2 Tim. iv. 2: "Preach the word," etc. etc.

It is *perfect.* 2 Tim. iii. 16: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God," etc. etc.

It is *plain,* and easy to be understood. 2 Tim. iii. 15: "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

THE GREAT SALVATION.

[NEWTOWN, LONG ISLAND, N. Y., 1810.]

THE GREAT SALVATION.*

How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?
Hebrews, ii. 3.

The reasoning and the reproofs of the apostle, contained in the epistle of which our text is a part, were, with peculiar propriety, addressed to the hardened and unbelieving Jews. In rejecting the Messiah, they had justly incurred the divine displeasure: and by obstinately refusing to receive him as that Saviour and King whom they had long anxiously expected, and whose character had been for ages most accurately delineated by the finger of prophecy, they did wantonly close every door to reconciliation with their Maker and their Judge.

The Jews were once the peculiar people of God, and favoured with light and with privileges which no other nation could boast. They had Moses and the prophets, the law and the temple. They had greater than these: for Jesus and the apostles, in due time, appeared and laboured to reclaim them from their errors and to rescue them from impending ruin. "God also bearing them witness, both with signs, and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his

* Written and delivered at Newtown, Long Island, New York, in 1810, soon after Dr. Lindsley was licensed to preach.

own will." (Heb. ii. 4.) And yet, these amazing displays of the power and goodness of the Almighty were utterly disregarded. This degenerate nation continued blind and unaffected. How then could they escape, since they wilfully neglected, and sneeringly spurned that great salvation which was most freely offered, and which they were most earnestly and affectionately importuned to accept?

They did not escape. The curse which they so madly imprecated upon themselves and their children, has overtaken them. And they remain to this day, in every corner of the earth, an invincible evidence of the truth of that gospel which they despised, and a striking monument of that just vengeance which must ever befall the perpetrators of crimes like theirs.

But what analogy can be traced between them and us? Have we crucified the Son of God, the compassionate Saviour of sinners; or have we ever slighted the messages of his servants? Are we not his avowed friends, and prepared, on all occasions, to defend religion and the Bible? Why then presume to reprove us, or seek to disturb our grateful and well-founded security by intimating to us, as Paul did to his countrymen, that we are in danger of eternal death; that there is hardly a probability of escape; nay, that there is no possibility of escape if *one thing* be neglected?

Now, my friends, I shall not attempt to sketch out the lines of resemblance between us and the Jewish nation in the days of the apostles. It is sufficient merely to observe, that, in spiritual privileges, they were exalted

far above every other people; and that Christian countries may, at present, be said to occupy the distinguished station which they forfeited. But what nation in Christendom can boast of advantages superior or even equal to our own? And surely the people, whom I now address, will not pretend that their opportunities of obtaining religious knowledge are inferior to those of any portion of their brethren. We mean not to make any invidious comparisons or distinctions. We do not inquire whether you have improved your means as faithfully as others have done? Nor do we insinuate that you are, in any respect, less virtuous than your neighbours; or that you have slighted the word of God more than they, in your circumstances, would have done.

The question with which we are now concerned is simply this: Have you all made sure of that salvation which the apostle styled *so great*, and which alone can prevent your everlasting perdition?

If there be any here who must reply in the negative—any who are still uninterested in the glorious atonement of our divine Mediator—then it follows that we may expostulate with them on their folly and their danger, with as much reason as with the most abandoned sinners on earth; and with infinitely more reason than with ignorant pagans who never heard that our Redeemer liveth. For there are but two—there can be but two classes among you. You are either believers, that is, Christians in heart and in practice, or you are not believers. If you are not, then we invite you to examine the ground on which you stand; and to declare, if you

can, how you will escape if you neglect so great salvation.

Consider, then, my hearers, where and what you are. Do for once look into your own hearts. Realize that you are now in the presence of Almighty God, who searches the hearts and tries the reins, and who notices your most secret thoughts and purposes and desires; and venture honestly to ask yourselves the alarming question: how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?

But what is this salvation, and why is it so interesting? Wherein does its greatness consist?

The salvation which Christ has purchased for sinners, is great indeed. It comprehends the richest blessings which God can bestow, and deliverance from the greatest evils which men can suffer. It includes everything which can render man's nature perfect or his life happy. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." (1 Cor. ii. 9.)

But to be more particular. It contains a remedy for sin. By the fall of Adam, all his posterity experience, not only the miseries which are inseparable from this life, but are liable to the curse and penalty of that law which pronounces death eternal for every transgression. The demands of this law Jesus has completely satisfied, by offering himself a sacrifice for sin in behalf of the offending party. All therefore who believe in him—all who accept him as their Saviour, are freed forever from the condemnation of the law, from the dominion of sin,

and from the pains of hell. Their iniquities are blotted out: they are washed in that blood which cleanseth from all impurity: and those heavy loads of guilt which oppressed their souls, and which almost overwhelmed them with despair, are now removed. They are restored to the favour and friendship of God, who appears no longer a consuming fire, but a kind and compassionate Father. They are at peace with him and with their own consciences. They are translated from the power of darkness into the kingdom of our Lord, so that sin shall no longer reign in their mortal bodies, but they are enabled to serve God "in newness of spirit." (Rom. vii. 6.) They cease to be enslaved to those impetuous passions which so often impel mankind to the grossest follies and excesses. A new principle of life is planted within them. They become the temples of the Holy Ghost, whose wise counsels always direct and govern, and whose comfortable influences always cheer and refresh them.

When they shall thus have spent a holy, a heavenly, and, in some measure, a happy life on earth, Jesus will open to them the gates of heaven, and welcome them to the joys of Paradise—there to pass an eternity of perfect felicity in contemplating the wonderful works of God, in admiring the wisdom of his Providence, in adoring his infinite love to the sons of men, and in singing everlasting hymns of praise and joy and triumph to God, and the Lamb which was slain for the sins of the world. There they shall be with Jesus Christ, and behold the glory of Him in whose presence is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

This is the salvation which Christ has purchased for us. This is the salvation which is freely offered to all men in the gospel. How unspeakably great are its blessings? How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?

It is great—for it was contrived and procured by the Almighty and Eternal God, the infinite and incomprehensible Jehovah, the all-wise and righteous Sovereign of the universe: who so loved the world as to give his only begotten and well-beloved Son "that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John, iii. 16.)

It is great—for God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is its Author.

It is great—for its price was no less than the blood of Immanuel, the Prince of peace, the Creator of all things, the Judge of quick and dead.

It is great—for it has restored to man the image of his Maker, which he had lost by transgression.

It is great—for it entitles us to the greatest and most precious privileges both in this life and in that which is to come.

It is great—for it delivers us from the most dreadful evils—from torments which no finite mind can conceive. Instead of being regarded as enemies, as rebels, as outcasts from the presence and mercy of God, we may now become the sons of God, the brethren of Christ, and joint-heirs with him in glory.

Is God then so abundant in mercy as to propose the most inestimable treasures of his grace to our accept-

ance? And yet are we so blind to our own interest as wantonly to slight these overtures of love—this proffered crown of glory that fadeth not away?

Are we contented to live like the brutes that perish when it is in our power to hold intercourse with angels? Do we prefer the basest servitude to the glorious liberty of the sons of God?

Would we but seriously consider what the present life is, and what the future will be—what an infinite disproportion there is between a moment and eternity—between the greatest enjoyments or the severest sufferings and that eternal weight of glory, or that everlasting shame and confusion of face which await us hereafter—how contemptible would then appear the glory, the riches, the gaiety of this world? All its deceptive charms would vanish in an instant. We should view it as it really is, vain and worthless. Our former stupidity would amaze us, in having hazarded for a moment the loss of our innocence, the peace of our mind, and our title to the favour of God.

And why are not these our present reflections? Whither are our thoughts wandering, while this great, this glorious salvation is the theme of our meditation?

2. But, in the second place, *how* shall we escape? Is this then the subject of our inquiry in good earnest? Are we seeking some hiding-place from the Almighty's vengeance? some ark of safety to shelter us from the overwhelming flood? What are your views of this matter, brethren? Where is the door through which you purpose to escape?

You are all, whether old or young, rich or poor, bond or free, exhorted to answer the question with the same candour and fidelity that you would answer it, were the executioner standing before you, with the instrument of death uplifted ready to strike the fatal blow, and allowing but a moment to pronounce your last confession. This in fact is your awful case, but very faintly represented. For every impenitent sinner is condemned already,—absolutely condemned to death temporal, spiritual and eternal. And you know not how soon, perhaps this very night, your souls may be required of you to endure the penalty which your guilt has so richly merited.

What provision then have you made for a crisis so awfully momentous? How will you escape, "when the Lord shall descend from heaven with a mighty shout, with ten thousands of his angels, in flaming fire, to take vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ"? (2 Thess. i. 8.) When all men, not only the penitent and the righteous, but the most abandoned and prosperous sinners also, shall stand before an impartial tribunal to be judged according to their actions in this life? Have you made ready your account? Have you prepared a plea on which you are willing to hazard your eternal destiny? No—no! Your consciences tell you that you are still in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity. And whither will you go for help?

Will you have recourse to those systems of morality or natural religion, which pagans and philosophers and

infidels and fools, in every age, have admired and eulogized as superior to the gospel, because more flattering to reason and more indulgent to licentious appetites? Dare you depend on any created arm—on any finite being, however exalted? Will you confide in riches, in power, in honours, or in your own good deeds? Will you endeavour to hide yourselves in the dens of the mountains? or will you call upon the rocks to fall and cover you from the face of Him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb whose salvation you have despised? Finally, search the universe through, and see what there is to afford you hope. Pry into the stores of nature—examine the resources of intellect and all the contrivances of ingenuity. Give yourselves no rest till you have made thorough search and thorough trial: and say, what is there on which you can—on which you dare rely? If you can find nothing—if you can devise no plan which is not revealed in the Bible—then how will you escape if you neglect the great salvation which it unfolds?

Behold, brethren, what an invaluable prize is placed before you. And is it not worth every effort—every sacrifice which you can possibly make in order to obtain it? But, wonderful to tell, there is no difficulty in the way—no obstacle to overcome—no fiery trial to endure—no penance to perform.

Is any one of you ready to exclaim: "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thou-

sands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" Nothing like this is demanded. "He hath showed, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah, vi. 8.) "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." (Acts, xvi. 31.) "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart, thou shalt be saved." (Rom. x. 9.)

Since this is the dispensation of grace under which we are now placed—since nothing is required at our hands but a willingness to accept of salvation as a free gift through faith in Jesus Christ—what excuse can be urged by that man who will not purchase everlasting happiness at so cheap a rate?—who will not go to Christ that he may have life? Since the terms therefore of this great salvation are so reasonable and so easy: what madness is it—what aggravation of guilt to reject it?

But "this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." (John, iii. 19.) "And thou Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee." (Matt. xi. 23, 24.) God grant that it may not be more tolerable for Sodom in that day than for us. Our privileges are great, beyond

comparison even with the most favoured portion of Judea. Whoever among us then shall continue in sin, is, in the same proportion, more criminal, and will undoubtedly be doomed to a more dreadful punishment. If it be allowed that, as a people, we are more virtuous and teachable than were the citizens of Capernaum or Bethsaida; still, this general superiority will be no consolation to the unhappy individual who neglects this great salvation. So far from alleviating his torments, it will but increase them. The wo therefore pronounced on them, will, with peculiar and augmented force, apply to every unbeliever in this assembly,—to every hardened impenitent soul in every Christian church or congregation.

Had the sublime and important truths which you have so often heard, been proclaimed to the benighted idolaters of the East, or to the wretched savages of the Western wilderness, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. And have not we reason to apprehend that the Lord, in just indignation, will ere long deprive us of privileges which we so grossly abuse? How soon may we be left, like the Jews, to our own stubbornness and folly, while the true spirit of the gospel shall fly away to regions which as yet the light of revelation has never illuminated?

Did the apostles and primitive teachers of Christianity forsake their enlightened countrymen, in despair of success, after having made the most zealous efforts to awaken and convince them? Did they traverse the uncultivated wilds of Scythia and Gaul and Britain, and inculcate the

mild peaceful doctrines of the cross upon those fierce barbarians whose very religion breathed forth war and murder and human sacrifice? And did the Gaul and the Scythian listen with joy to the glad tidings of salvation, and welcome to their bosoms the humble Jesus of Nazareth whom his own brethren had crucified and scorned?

How ought we to tremble, lest, in like manner, we be doomed to give place to those who will be more grateful —to those who will more highly value and more faithfully improve such unmerited mercies? How soon may coldness and formality and self-wrought righteousness pervade our churches, while the song of fervent unaffected devotion shall ascend to heaven from the lips of the Cherokee, the Hottentot and the Hindoo? The Spirit of the Lord will not always strive with man. If we continue to neglect this great salvation, the Lord will most assuredly visit us with darkness and with vengeance. We shall be given over to the deceitful imaginations of our own wicked hearts.

While we flatter ourselves with a name to live, and exult in our superiority to other men—while we say, come and see our zeal for the Lord; no doubt but we are the people and wisdom shall die with us: behold, we shall then appear righteous only unto men, while within we shall be full of hypocrisy and iniquity: we shall be merely feeding our pride and vanity with the external pageantry of religion, when, in truth, we shall be further removed from the kingdom of heaven than the wild man of the desert, or even than the ferocious cannibal of the South Sea Islands.

Brethren, this is not mere conjecture; nor is it the boding of despondency or uncharitableness. Such is the usual course of Divine Providence. Abused favours do always, sooner or later, bring down the curse of heaven upon the heads of presumptuous offenders. And facts in our own country already confirm what we have advanced. These speak a language which cannot be misapprehended.

Look to the oldest settlements at the East and at the South. Contemplate their religious aspect and character and condition. In the first, the externals of religion never more entirely engrossed the people: and they never before believed themselves half so wise and good as at present. And yet infidelity, under a gentler name, never more completely triumphed. It was not so intended by the devout pilgrims who first saluted the naked rock and barren sands of Plymouth! Who could then have foreseen—who would then have ventured to predict—that the descendants of the humble, the pious, the persecuted Puritans would so soon deny the divinity of that Saviour who had conducted their fathers from the iron grasp of a bigoted ecclesiastic and political despotism to a land of liberty and rest, of peace and abundance? Who could have believed that the very soul of Christianity would so soon be torn away and the meager skeleton alone be suffered to remain? But so it is: and may its frightful form serve as a warning and a beacon to all careless and hardened sinners—to all the lukewarm and self-righteous among us!*

* At this time, I knew little of *New England religion* except what I learned from the *one-sided* periodicals of the day. The above re-

In some parts of the South—of the "ancient dominion"—we perceive a similar result under quite contrary appearances. There the cant of hypocrisy is seldom heard, because religion is unfashionable. Men openly disregard the gospel. They live as they list. Unconcerned about the future, provided they can enjoy the present. They are neither awed by the terrors of a judgment day, nor allured by the hopes of eternal felicity, nor influenced by vulgar opinion, even so far as to respect those institutions and ordinances which have been held sacred from time immemorial. And yet there are ample proofs still remaining that religion, even here, once had her votaries. The walls of ruined churches, which not unfrequently meet the eye, and augment the gloom of the passing stranger, proclaim the existence of ancient piety and of present licentiousness. Where once the calls of mercy greeted the listening audience—where once the invitations of divine love and goodness to partake of this great salvation were reiterated from day to day—where late the seraphic Davies prayed and wept and preached—there, now, perpetual silence reigns! And men are no longer warned of danger—no more threatened with the pains of hell—no more disturbed in their round of mirth and pleasure. All things seem to smile upon them; and their sole delight is to take, to the full extent of their capacity and means, what this poor world can yield; and,

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marks were doubtless applicable to some extent in 1810—and probably are so still—but extremely unjust as applicable to, or characteristic of, New England generally.

at last, with philosophic indifference, or rather with brutish stupidity, await the approach of death,—as if annihilation were all that death can inflict!*

Here let the pensive traveller survey the relics of departed piety: and while his heart melts within him at a sight so sad, let the grateful sentiment be indulged that she still finds a refuge in many portions of our land; and let his prayer ascend to heaven that light from on high may speedily beam upon these desolate regions, and once more enliven the inhabitants of this dark valley of sin and death!

Finally, brethren, if there be any truth in the remarks which we have ventured to suggest—if the experience of past ages, and the actual circumstances of our own times afford us any ground of calculation—then surely does it become us watchfully and prayerfully, diligently and steadily to guard against a result so unspeakably dreadful. It becomes us, as we value our own souls and the souls of those who shall live after us; as we covet the joys of heaven and would escape the pains of hell; to arise while the sceptre of grace is extended towards us, to strive to enter in at the straight gate, to give all diligence to make our calling and election

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* I wrote this sermon immediately after my return from a hasty excursion into a part of *old* Virginia, and agreeably to the impressions actually made on my mind. I had never seen, nor have I since seen, so deplorable a *spiritual desert* as the country, where Davies and others had once successfully laboured, then presented. A great and radical change for the better has long since been in progress: and, probably, the remarks in the text would *now* be altogether inappropriate and uncharitable.

sure. For how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?

This salvation is now freely and unreservedly tendered to all sinners, even the vilest, without any exception, to whom the gospel is preached. Hearken then and consider, all you who have hitherto lived carelessly and wickedly—you who have given the reins to your passions and appetites—you who, with a high hand, have provoked the Majesty of heaven and earth by repeated transgressions: why will you die? Bad as you are, and loudly as your sins cry to heaven for vengeance, your case is not desperate, unless you resolve to make it so, by persisting in the rejection of this great salvation. Jesus Christ died for sinners—for the chief of sinners—he died for you. He now entreats you to come and partake of the benefits which his own blood, shed on Calvary, has purchased for his people. And this glad news of deliverance from sin and hell, we who minister in his name are fully authorized to publish and declare to all the guilty children of men. We do therefore beseech you, beloved brethren, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God, that you may be blessed forever.

It is not yet too late. You may be eternally happy, if you will. Christ still offers you his salvation. "Wash you, make you clean: (saith the Lord:) put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes: cease to do evil: learn to do well: Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." (Isai. i. 16, 18.)

With such assurances of God's mercy, how can we take another step towards our own undoing? Why do we not, like the prodigal son, arise and return to our Father who is ready to receive us with open arms?

There is no time but the present to prepare for heaven. To-day, if you will hear the voice of Jesus and accept this great salvation, harden not your hearts. If you ever mean to escape perdition, why, [suffer me again affectionately to ask, though the question may have been put to you a thousand times already,] why do you defer the work to what you term a more convenient season? To a season which, Scripture and reason and observation do most clearly and incontestably prove, never will and never can arrive.

Are there any wise calculating men in this house who argue thus:—"By-and-by, when such a scheme shall be accomplished—such an office obtained—so much wealth acquired—when we shall have arrived at such an age, or at such a standing in society—then we will devote the remainder of our days to religion; then we will think of death and judgment and eternity in good earnest. At present, our attention is too much engrossed by other objects: we shall then be more at leisure." Is this then your calculation and your last resort? It is childish and absurd in the extreme. You would not reckon thus in the most trifling concerns of life. You would be ashamed to avow such weakness in contriving the most inconsiderable plan for temporal aggrandizement.

For, setting aside the ten thousand contingencies on which your life, humanly speaking, depends; the abso-

lute uncertainty of another year or another hour; and the consequent folly of postponing to a distant period a work of acknowledged infinite magnitude and importance; passing, I say, all considerations of this kind: what is the most favourable construction which such sophistry, so universally relied on, can possibly admit? It is plainly and simply this: you cannot or will not repent now, because there are too many difficulties in the way; but you purpose to do it some twenty or thirty years hence, when you shall have increased your guilt and your incumbrances a thousandfold. Such reasoning, on any other subject, would justly expose you to the ridicule and contempt of your fellow-men. And yet, how many of you will probably go from this place of worship, and reason yourselves down to hell in this very way?

Now, my dear fellow-immortals, I wish not to be thought harsh or censorious or uncharitable. I charge you with no folly or infatuation which does not attach to our whole wayward race without distinction or exception. Such is the blindness of our nature, and such the deceitfulness of sin, that we all err in the same manner. We all procrastinate. Duty is ever irksome, and we put it off. Penitence is humbling, and we fortify ourselves against it. Reformation is painful, and we flatter ourselves that time will accomplish all that is necessary without so great a sacrifice as seems at present to be demanded. These things therefore we studiously banish from our minds. We promise ourselves a more convenient season to attend to them. Though death meets us at every turn, and warns us every day to be up and

doing with our might the things that our hands find to perform, we still whisper peace to our souls, and console ourselves with the prospect of many years to come. Thus we travel on, and witness the departure of our fellow-travellers, on our right hand and on our left, who were trusting to the same refuges of lies in which we confide, without becoming a whit the wiser or more thoughtful. Though the Spirit and the Providence of God continually admonish and threaten us in a thousand various ways, and urge home to our hearts the most awful truths and considerations which can affect and influence an accountable being; still we contrive to resist them all, and to smile amidst the ruins of immortality.

Such is human nature. Every saint in heaven and on earth has been guilty of the same folly with which every impenitent sinner is now chargeable. All have sought out excuses for delay. And if any have been constrained at length to seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness, they will feel no disposition to abuse or upbraid those who still stand afar off. These they will tenderly compassionate and devoutly pray for. Yes, my friends, we all have ample cause to mourn over our own imperfections and to be abundantly indulgent to the frailties of others. But to God we must answer and not to man. The question is not, how much is one man better than his neighbour, but who is yet a stranger to God and to the covenant of promise? who continues to slight the gospel of Jesus Christ, and to neglect the great salvation which it unfolds and proffers to our acceptance?

Be entreated, my unbelieving hearers, whoever you

are, to be reconciled to God—to flee the wrath to come—to lay hold on the hope set before you in the gospel—to humble yourselves at the footstool of sovereign mercy—to look to Jesus that you may live—and live forever in his presence and in his kingdom.

Are any of you beginning to feel alarm and concern about your souls? Are you ready to inquire what you must do to be saved? Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. Pray to him that he would lead you in the right way. Pray for a new heart, for a penitent believing heart, for a right spirit, for a tender conscience, for a teachable disposition, for grace to choose the good and refuse the evil, for ability to devote yourselves to the service of your Maker and to adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour by a holy walk and conversation in all things becoming his gospel and the ransomed trophies of his redeeming love.

Read the Bible, and pray while you ponder over its precious pages. Pray without ceasing, that you may understand and apply its consolatory, purifying, peace-speaking truths. Pray for the enlightening and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit. Pray, and never give over praying till you reach the mansions of glory in safety. Watch and pray: and strive for the victory over every corruption. In the strength of the Lord, you shall triumph gloriously. This great salvation shall be yours. Heaven, and all the blessedness which God can bestow, shall be yours, and yours forever. Amen!

END OF VOLUME II.

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